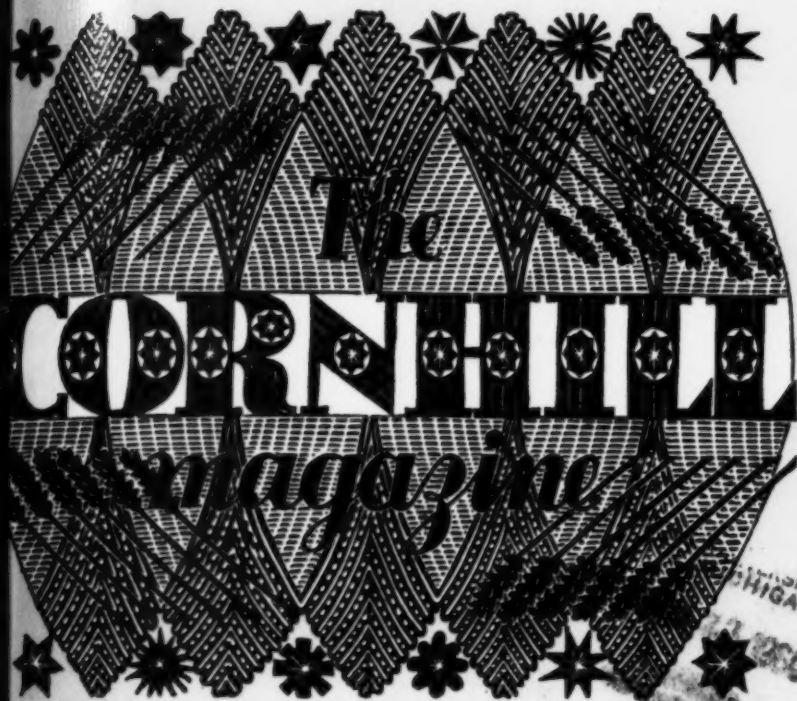


77
CENTENARY



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OSBERT LANCASTER ★ IVOR BROWN ★
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JOHN BETJEMAN ★ MARGARET LANE ★
★ KENNETH CLARK ★ ALAN MOOREHEAD



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THE CORNHILL MAGAZINE



The Centenary Number

1860

1960

At present THE CORNHILL appears quarterly and will publish occasional Supplements containing work of up to 35,000 words in length.

The Editor asks that all contributions should be addressed to him at 50 Albemarle Street, London, W.1, and accompanied by a stamped envelope.

THE CORNHILL costs 3s. 6d. (except this Centenary Number which costs 6s. od. for non-subscribers). Subscriptions for THE CORNHILL are available from any bookseller or from 50 Albemarle Street, London, W.1. A subscription for the year costs 16s. od. (overseas 15s. 6d.) and for two years 32s. od. (overseas 31s. od.) including postage.

* * *

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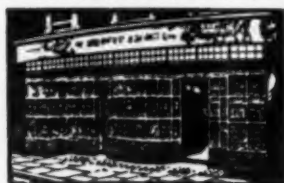
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No. 1025

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES OF CONTRIBUTORS

JOHN BETJEMAN, poet, broadcaster. His most recent book is his *Collected Poems* (Duff Cooper Memorial Award, 1958), and he has edited Collins' *Guide to English Parish Churches*. He was awarded the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry, 1960, and his autobiography in verse, *Summoned by Bells*, is to be published by John Murray this autumn.

ALAN MOOREHEAD Australian by birth, novelist, journalist, war correspondent. Recent books are *Gallipoli* (*Sunday Times* 1956 Book Prize, Duff Cooper Memorial Award), *No Room in the Ark*, and *The White Nile* is to be published shortly by Hamish Hamilton.

JOHN D. STEWART, short-story writer, playwright, civil engineer, lives on Gibraltar, and is the only accredited British bull-fight critic. He has written radio plays, and his stage play was produced at the Abbey Theatre in 1959. He is now working on a novel.

SIR KENNETH CLARK was Chairman of the Arts Council 1953-59, Director of the National Gallery 1934-45. His publications include *Leonardo da Vinci* (Cambridge University Press), *Florentine Painting* (Faber), *Landscape into Art* and *The Nude* (John Murray). His new book, *Looking at Pictures*, has just been published by John Murray.

OSBERT LANCASTER, artist, author, cartoonist, caricaturist, stage designer. His most recent books are *Etudes* (a selection of pocket cartoons) and *Here, of all Places* (John Murray).

MARGARET LANE, novelist, biographer, journalist. Her books include *Tale of Beatrix Potter* (Warne), *The Brontë Story*, *A Crown of Convolvulus* (Heinemann), and her forthcoming book is to be *A Calabash of Diamonds* (Heinemann).

IVOR BROWN, dramatic critic, was Editor of *The Observer* 1942-48, and Chairman of the British Drama League. Among his publications are *Dark Ladies* (Collins), *Words in Our Time* and *Chosen Words* (Cape), and *William Shakespeare* (Nelson).

DONALD BRUCE is a schoolmaster and contributor to various magazines. He is at present working on a book about Smollett.

ELIZABETH TAYLOR has written a number of novels and short stories; they include *A Wreath of Roses*, *A Game of Hide-and-Seek*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, *Angel* and *The Blush* (collected short stories) (Peter Davies).

IRIS ORIGO is Anglo-American by birth, married to an Italian and lives in Italy. Amongst her recent books are *The Last Attachment* (Cape & Murray) *Leopardi* (Hamish Hamilton), *The Merchant of Prato* and *A Measure of Love* (Cape).

WILLIAM SANSOM, novelist, short-story writer. His books include *The Face of Innocence*, *Pleasures Strange and Simple*, *A Bed of Roses*, *The Icicle and the Sun*, *The Cautious Heart*, and his forthcoming book is *Blue Skies*, *Brown Studies* (Hogarth Press).

ROGER PILKINGTON, formerly researcher in genetics, author, lecturer. Recent books are *The Ways of the Air* (Routledge), *Robert Boyle* (John Murray), *Small Boat to the Skagerrak*, and *World without End* (Macmillan).

JOHN VERNEY, painter, illustrator and author of *Verney Abroad* and *Going to the Wars* (Collins). He is Joint Editor of *Elizabethan*. Earlier episodes in the autobiography of Paul Pot appeared in *The Cornhill* in 1956, No. 1008, and 1958, No. 1016.

MAY SARTON, writer, poet, lecturer, is of Belgian extraction and lives in America. Her books include *Shadow of a Man* (Cresset Press), *A Shower of Summer Days* (Hutchinson) and *The Birth of a Grandfather* (Gollancz).



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Foreword to the Centenary Number

WITH this issue, *The Cornhill* embarks upon its second century. It entered the world just over a hundred years ago, in January 1860; and few European periodicals have had a more resounding send-off. From the offices of Smith, Elder, the shrewd yet adventurous firm who launched it and had engaged Thackeray as editor, a hundred and twenty thousand copies of the opening number went out to the Victorian literary public; and along the City street that passed beneath their windows 'nothing was to be seen but people carrying bundles of the orange-coloured magazine.' Its success had far exceeded Thackeray's hopes; and so nervous did he become that he declared that he was quite unable to sleep 'for counting up his subscribers' and felt obliged to leave London and take a holiday abroad.

Yet the enthusiasm that greeted the youthful *Cornhill* is not difficult to understand. Thackeray had a large and cultivated audience; and he was in a position to give that audience exactly what it needed. The Victorian reader relished serial novels; and Volume One, besides the editor's own *Lovel the Widower*, included *Framley Parsonage*, which in the lavish nineteenth-century way Trollope had been specially commissioned to produce. Contemporary readers were also devoted to poetry; and here was Tennyson's *Tithonus*, which showed the poet at his elegiac best. Among other contributors to early issues were Matthew Arnold (who supplied some fine essays), John Ruskin (who electrified his critics with his celebrated disquisition on the relationship of Capital and Labour, *Unto This Last*), Charlotte and Emily Brontë, George Eliot, Mrs. Gaskell, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Dickens, Wilkie Collins and Washington Irving. They were followed by Stevenson, Swinburne, Burton, Henry James and Hardy.

This is not the place to tell the story of *The Cornhill's* progress, or describe the characteristics of successive editors. It must be enough to say that, between 1860 and 1939, when it was temporarily

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Foreword to the Centenary Number

suspended on the outbreak of war, the magazine provided a platform for a remarkable series of distinguished writers, and that its editorial policy was never circumscribed by any inelastic set of rules. After its war-time suspension, the dormant periodical was revived in January 1944, and I was asked by the firm of John Murray (who had acquired it from the original proprietors in 1917) to undertake its editorship. The new *Cornhill* did not pretend to be an experimental magazine; various magazines of that stamp were already flourishing; and we regarded our contents as much from the reader's as from the writer's point of view. To publish good writing was our main object.

For *The Cornhill* had a tradition behind it when it first emerged in 1860—the great tradition of English periodicals, founded in 1802 by the appearance of the *Edinburgh Review* and carried on by the *Quarterly* and *Blackwood's*. Some were liberal: others sternly, even savagely, conservative. But together they provided an outlet for an important type of literary effort: they welcomed the full-length essay, historical, critical, controversial. At the same time they appealed to the educated man and reflected the civilised taste of their day. Such is the aim of *The Cornhill*. Its function is to satisfy the educated taste, and to provide serious writers with an opportunity that at present they can discover nowhere else.


Today the scope of periodical publication is growing more and more restricted. Very few papers can find room for lengthy contributions; the full-length essay seems to have gone the way of the epic and the blank verse tragedy; and long short stories, on the Henry Jamesian scale, must not expect a very warm reception. *The Cornhill*, however, is so proportioned that it can usually afford to spread itself; and, during my editorship, I was able to publish essays and stories of considerable bulk, often by young and little-known writers, who have since been encouraged to advance into less restricted fields of authorship. Many distinguished authors have made their début in the magazine. While English readers demand intelligent writing, the centenarian *Cornhill* has an important creative part to play.

PETER QUENNELL



IN the autumn of 1835 Mary Russell Mitford wrote to a friend: 'Did you ever see the London weekly literary journal called *The Athenaeum*? It is the fashionable paper now.' During the next decade another inveterate correspondent, Elizabeth Barrett, declared that she held this journal 'in the very first rank, both in ability and integrity'. A recent commentator has even described *The Athenaeum* as 'the most notable literary achievement of the Victorian age'.

IN 1921 *The Athenaeum* merged with *The Nation*, and ten years later both joined the *New Statesman*. Today, as a radical literary weekly, the *New Statesman* endeavours to continue in *The Athenaeum*'s great tradition, and certainly *The Athenaeum* and the Dilke family to which it owed its greatness would wish to join the *New Statesman* in offering their felicitations to such a promising stripling as *The Cornhill* on the occasion of its first centenary.



Cornwall in Childhood

BY JOHN BETJEMAN



COME, Hygiene, goddess of the growing boy,
I here salute thee in Sanatogen !
Anaemic girls need Virol, but for me
Be Scott's Emulsion, rusks, and Mellin's Food,
Cod-liver oil and malt, and for my neck
Wright's Coal Tar Soap, Euthymol for my teeth.
Come, friends of Hygiene, Electricity
And those young twins, Free Thought and clean Fresh Air :
Attend the long express from Waterloo
That takes us down to Cornwall. Tea-time shows
The small fields waiting, every blackthorn hedge
Straining inland before the south west gale.
The emptying train, wind in the ventilators,
Puffs out of Egloskerry to Tresméer
Through minty meadows, under bearded trees
And hills upon whose sides the clinging farms
Hold Bible Christians. Can it really be
That this same carriage came from Waterloo ?
On Wadebridge station what a breath of sea

Cornwall in Childhood

Scented the Camel valley ! Cornish air,
Soft Cornish rains, and silence after steam . . .
As out of Derry's stable came the brake
To drag us up those long, familiar hills,
Past haunted woods and oil-lit farms and on
To far Trebetherick by the sounding sea.

Oh what a host of questions in me rose :
Were spring tides here or neap ? And who was down ?
Had Mr. Rosevear built himself a house ?
Was there another wreck upon Doom Bar ?
The carriage lamps lit up the pennywort
And fennel in the hedges of the lane ;
Huge slugs were crawling over slabs of slate ;
Then, safe in bed, I watched the long legg'd fly
With red transparent body tap the walls
And fizzle in the candle flame and drag
Its poisonous-looking abdomen away
To somewhere out of sight and out of mind,
While through the open window came the roar
Of full Atlantic rollers on the beach.

Then before breakfast down toward the sea
I ran alone, monarch of miles of sand,
Its shining stretches satin-smooth and vein'd.
I felt beneath bare feet the lugworm casts
And walked, where only gulls and oyster-catchers
Had stepped before me to the water's edge.
The morning tide flowed in to welcome me,
The fan-shaped scallop shells, the backs of crabs,
The bits of driftwood worn to reptile shapes,
The heaps of bladder-wrack the tide had left,
(Which, lifted up, sent sandhoppers to leap
In hundreds round me) answered " Welcome back !"
Along the links and under cold Bray Hill
Fresh water pattered from an iris marsh
And drowned the golf-balls on its stealthy way
Over the slates in which the elvers hid,
And spread across the beach. I used to stand,

John Betjeman

A speculative water engineer—

Here I would plan a dam and there a sluice

And thus divert the stream, creating lakes,

A chain of locks descending to the sea.

Inland I saw, above the tamarisks,

From various villas morning breakfast smoke

Which warned me then of mine ; so up the lane

I wandered home contented, full of plans,

Pulling a length of pink convolvulus

Whose blossoms, almost as I picked them, died.

Bright as the morning sea those early days !

Though there were tears, and sand thrown in my eyes,

And punishments and smells of mackintosh,

Long barefoot climbs to fetch the morning milk,

Terrors from hissing geese and angry shouts,

Slammed doors and waitings and a sense of dread,

Still warm as shallow sea-pools in the sun

And welcoming to me the girls and boys.

Wet rocks on which our bathing dresses dried ;

Small coves, deserted in our later years

For more adventurous inlets down the coast :

Paralysis when climbing up the cliff—

Too steep to reach the top, too far to fall,

Tumbling to death in seething surf below,

A ledge just wide enough to lodge one's foot,

A sea-pink clump the only thing to clutch,

Cold wave-worn slate so mercilessly smooth

And no one near and evening coming on—

Till Ralph arrived : " Now put your left foot here.

Give us your hand " . . . and back across the years

I swing to safety with old friends again.

Small seem they now, those once tremendous cliffs,

Diminished now those joy-enclosing bays.

Childhood is measured out by sounds and smells

And sights, before the dark of reason grows.

Ears ! Hear again the wild sou'westers whine !

Cornwall in Childhood

Three days on end would the September gale
Slam at our bungalows ; three days on end
Rattling cheap doors and making tempers short.
It mattered not, for then enormous waves
House-high rolled thunderous on Greenaway,
Flinging up spume and shingle to the cliffs.
Unmoved amid the foam, the cormorant
Watched from its peak. In all the roar and swirl
The still and small things gained significance.
Somehow the freckled cowrie would survive
And prawns hang waiting in their watery woods ;
Deep in the noise there was a core of peace ;
Deep in my heart a warm security.

Nose ! Smell again the early morning smells :
Congealing bacon and my father's pipe ;
The after-breakfast freshness out of doors
Where sun had dried the heavy dew and freed
Acres of thyme to scent the links and lawns ;
The rotten apples on our shady path
Where blowflies settled upon squashy heaps,
Intent and gorging ; at the garden gate
Reek of Solignum on the wooden fence ;
Mint round the spring, and fennel in the lane,
And honeysuckle wafted from the hedge ;
The Lynams' cess-pool like a body-blow ;
Then, clean, medicinal and cold—the sea.
“ Breathe in the ozone, John. It's iodine.”
But which is iodine and which is drains ?
Salt and hot sun on rubber water-wings . . .
Home to the luncheon smell of Irish stew
And washing-up stench from the kitchen sink
Because the sump is blocked. The afternoons
Brought coconut smell of gorse ; at Mably's farm
Sweet scent of drying cowdung ; then the moist
Exhaling of the earth in Shilla woods—
First earth encountered after days of sand.
Evening brought back the gummy smell of toys

John Betjeman

And fishy stink of glue and Stickphast paste,
And sleep inside the laundriness of sheets.

Eyes! See again the rock-face in the lane,
Years before tarmac and the motor-car.

Across the estuary Stepper Point
Stands, still unquarried, black against the sun;
On its Atlantic face the cliffs fall sheer.
Look down into the weed world of the lawn—
The devil's-coach-horse beetle hurries through,
Lifting its tail up as I bar the way
To further flowery jungles.

See once more
The Padstow ferry, worked by oar and sail,
Her outboard engine always going wrong,
Ascend the slippery quay's up-ended slate,
The sea-weed hanging from the harbour wall.
Hot was the pavement under, as I gazed
At lanterns, brass, rope and ships' compasses
In the marine-store window on the quay.
The shoe-shop in the square was cool and dark.
The Misses Quintrell, fancy stationers,
Had most to show me—dialect tales in verse
Published in Truro (Netherton and Worth)
And model lighthouses of serpentine.
Climb the steep hill to where that belt of elm
Circles the town and church tower, reached by lanes
Whose ferny ramparts shelter toadflax flowers
And periwinkles. See hydrangeas bloom
In warm back-gardens full of fuchsia bells.
To the returning ferry soon draws near
Our own low bank of sand-dunes; then the walk
Over a mile of quicksand evening-cold.

It all is there, excitement for the eyes,
Imagined ghosts on unfrequented roads
Gated and winding up through broom and gorse
Out of the parish, on to who knows where?
What pleasure, as the oil-lamp sparkled gold

Cornwall in Childhood

On cut-glass tumblers and the flip of cards,
To feel protected from the night outside :
Safe Cornish holidays before the storm !

*

*This Cornish holiday will form part of the author's forthcoming
autobiography SUMMONED BY BELLS. Drawing by Michael Tree*

Image of the White Man

BY ALAN MOOREHEAD

CAPTAIN JAMES COOK, sailing up the unexplored south-eastern coast of Australia in May, 1770, had a curious experience. When his ship, the *Endeavour*, anchored close to land in the vicinity of Botany Bay, the natives on shore took no notice whatever. An old woman and some children, all of them quite naked, appeared before a group of huts and, having made a fire, 'set about dressing their dinner with perfect composure.' There were some men about as well, and they, too, appeared to be very little alarmed or disturbed by this sudden, extraordinary visitation from the outside world.

The *Endeavour*, certainly, was not a very big ship—she was only 370 tons and carried a crew of 85—but she was the first glimpse of civilisation these aborigines had ever had, and no doubt to a primitive mind she was beyond all comprehension: she was as strange and inexplicable as some sudden phenomenon of the natural elements, the piling-up of storm clouds in the sky, an eclipse of the sun, or perhaps, more simply, a giant uprooted tree that had floated up on to the coast. And since it is a basic human instinct to fear the unknown and, if possible, to disregard it—if you pretend not to see the monster, perhaps he won't notice you—the aborigines went on with their dinner.

Captain Cook ordered a longboat to the shore, and as it drew near, the natives saw that there were men on board: not men whom they could regard as normal in any way, since they had white faces and extraordinary coverings on their bodies, but still quite definitely men. Then, at last, the natives experienced the shock of recognition. This was something they could understand, and they reacted as, probably we would react in similar circumstances: they prepared to defend themselves.

Captain Cook threw them some 'beads, nails, and other trifles'

Image of the White Man

and 'used every possible means to convince them that no injury was intended.' But it was all to no purpose: as soon as the crew began to disembark, the natives attacked them with spears and had to be driven off with a discharge of muskets.

Captain Cook was a laconic man, and we do not know all the details of what followed, but it seems that, in the end, the natives were won round. In a day or two they had grown accustomed to the white men's faces, and if the natives were not yet absolutely friendly, they were filled at least with a passive and overwhelming curiosity.

This first contact between whites and primitive coloured men is a fascinating moment, and it seems to have followed roughly the same pattern wherever it occurred—whether it was Vasco da Gama landing in East Africa, Columbus in the West Indies, or Cook in Australia. Naturally the native was bewildered. The late Professor Julius E. Lips, author of *The Savage Hits Back*, was hardly exaggerating when he said, 'The first appearance of the white man in tribal territory produced astonishing emotions—excitement such as we might feel if we were suddenly to meet, in Trafalgar Square or Times Square, beings who had descended from Mars.' In countries like India, China, and Japan, where an advanced culture was already in existence when the first white men arrived, the shock was naturally less profound. But to the natives of Africa and the South Seas, the white man was an awesome and frightening spectacle. Often he was regarded as some kind of demigod, a tribal chieftain who had returned from the ghostly kingdom of the dead and who was now endowed with magical and supernatural powers.

Only a few years ago I myself had such an encounter. I was travelling with a friend on rather a foot-loose journey through South-east Asia, and we were about to fly down to Bali from Singapore when someone suggested that it would be a much more interesting experience to visit the Dyaks who were still living an isolated life in the jungles of northern Borneo.

It seemed at the time to be an excellent idea—every traveller likes to go places where he thinks no one else has been before—and we crossed over by sea to the British Crown Colony of Sarawak on the northern coast of Borneo. At Kuching, the tiny capital of the place,

we found a guide-interpreter and, with a little string of porters carrying our bedding and stores, set off for the interior. I cannot pretend that during the next few weeks we penetrated into any really unexplored country, but we did at least meet tribesmen whom few, if any, white men had visited before.

In particular I remember arriving one evening just before dark at a village which consisted simply of a single rickety wooden building (known in Borneo as a longhouse) built above the banks of a river with thick jungle all around. The women, with sarongs round their waists and bamboo buckets slung over their shoulders, had come down to the river to fetch water for the night when they heard us approaching through the trees above them on the opposite bank. They stood for a moment absolutely rigid, staring at us with the intensity of wild animals that have been suddenly surprised. Then, with one accord, they turned and bolted for the longhouse, chattering and screaming to one another as they ran. By the time we got down to the river and waded across it, we could see glimpses of their men hiding behind trees and bushes, watching our approach. We smiled, we waved, we used every possible means to convince them that no injury was intended, and by the time we got to the steps of the longhouse, they had gathered in a body around us.

There is a great tradition of hospitality among the Dyaks, and we were escorted on to the veranda of the building, offered food (rice in earthenware pots), and shown a place where we could spread out our bedding for the night. Presently children began to appear in the doorways along the veranda, and they were followed after a little time by the women. Within half an hour we were surrounded at a distance of two or three feet by a ring of staring faces. They stared and stared. They practically gobbled us up with their staring. One's slightest gesture—the lighting of a cigarette, a smile, the crossing of one's legs—was followed with an intense, burning curiosity, and each new article that was brought out of our porters' packs was greeted with an outburst of excited comment. These were not circumstances that called for excessive modesty, but even so it was a slight ordeal getting undressed with that wall of faces pressing around us. Every particle of one's shrinking white body was scrutinised and appraised with cries of astonishment. And so it continued

Image of the White Man

through the hot, mosquito-ridden night. Whenever I woke, I saw by the light of the cooking fires that same ring of curious, staring eyes.

Now there was nothing really abnormal or unexpected about all this, yet by the time we came to leave on the following day, it was quite evident that an incident of some importance had occurred in these people's lives—as indeed it had in ours. For weeks to come we were going to be described and discussed in the village; every detail of our appearance and our clothing, the very sound of our voices was going to be recalled.

This first impression of the men of the outside world was going to fix itself in tribal legend, just as, presumably, Captain Cook and his men fixed their images in the minds of the Australian aborigines.

We have, fortunately, a means of knowing something about these images. All over the world the coming of the white man has been recorded by native artists in the form of drawings and paintings, figurines carved in wood or ivory or modelled in clay, totem poles, and such artifacts as decorated drums and tribal weapons. A few examples, from a collection made by John Maass, are reproduced here and they have a special interest at the present time since it is clear that we are coming to the end of an era. There are not now many places in the world where one can undergo an experience such as I have described above. The great outburst of white expansion round the globe that began in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries is coming to an end at last. Nearly everywhere, contact between whites and coloured peoples has already been made and even developed to a point of intimate familiarity. There have been, of course, many complications in this relationship, many breaks and setbacks. At the end of the last century, for instance, a wave of xenophobia swept over China, and the Boxer Uprising against the white man was a ruthless and bloody business while it lasted. The Indian Mutiny of 1857 is another landmark in the history of racial relations. Prior to it, the colour bar was not a lively issue in India. Intermarriage between whites and Indians was fairly common, and illicit unions were legion. The British colonel in charge of a district would tend to know the local ruler and his family almost as well as he knew his own soldiers; he and his officers would engage in polo matches and

hunting expeditions with the maharajah and his court, his wife would visit the maharanee, and the children of the two families would play together. But the hostilities of 1857 put a stop to these friendships, and a century has hardly sufficed to re-establish the old easygoing relationship between Europeans and Indians in local social life.

Such upheavals have continued, as everybody knows, to the present day, but it is a fairly safe assumption that despite these antagonisms, white and coloured peoples are now drawing closer together, or at any rate they are meeting on terms of greater equality. Even within our own lifetimes, the most primitive Africans have learned to wear clothes, to read and write, to administer their own governments and adopt Western ways. It is no longer a great wonder that a Negro can be a surgeon, a sea captain, an actor, or a banker. The world is levelling out.

The importance of the accompanying illustrations is that most of them antedate the commotions of the last hundred years or so. They carry us directly back to the beginning of things and give us a glimpse of ourselves as we seemed to the fresh and curious eyes of the native artist when our ancestors first intruded into his village.

It is not always a flattering image of the white man that the native artist produced, since he soon learned that the white man was something less than divine: the slaver and the trader followed in the wake of the explorer and the missionary. Yet it will be seen from these illustrations that it was a spontaneous and candid portrait that emerged, and it often suggests a different aspect of history from the one we were taught in school. In our history books we were told of the intrepid pioneer and his righteous cause in bringing civilisation to the benighted Indians, yellow men, and blacks. The white man was the hero of the story—whether he was Vasco da Gama, Christopher Columbus, or Captain Cook—and his battle cry was *Dieu et mon droit*.

Here we have the coloured man's reply; and it is, in the main, an extremely good-tempered reply.

The Sultan of Mysore may have revelled in his mechanical man-eating tiger (2) but there is no attempt to caricature the unfortunate Englishman who is about to disappear into the animal's jaws. His eyes are wide and confiding, his hat is gallantly worn. The prosperous

Image of the White Man

nabob in the Bengal painting (1) may be a trifle smug but he is not debauched, and the simpler African carvings generally represent the white man as rather a benign figure, almost a father image.

Even more important than this is the quality of the work—not so much in the Japanese, Chinese, and Indian drawings since there we would expect an accomplished technique—but in the African carvings. One has only to glance at the wooden figure (6) of the white nun in French Equatorial Africa to recognise a sculptural talent of great strength and feeling. The rapt and devoted woman is beautifully observed. It is very far indeed from the primitive, distorted mask which is usually associated with the tribes of central Africa. Even more remarkable are the famous Benin bronzes from West Africa. The sixteenth-century Portuguese musketeer (8) represents a degree of artistic skill which the invading Europeans certainly did not possess. The elaborate pattern on the helmet and the coat of mail is traced with a Renaissance freedom and exactitude; the stance is precisely that of a man about to lift a gun to his shoulder, and the hands are beautifully moulded.

As they grew to know the white man better, the native artists appear to have followed a definite and logical progression in their work. The ship was the first evidence of the white man's arrival, and consequently it is the ship that recurs again and again in the early drawings of the coastal tribes around the world. We can even trace the development of Western navigation through native art: at first the sailing ship is depicted, then, in the nineteenth century, the paddle steamer with its auxiliary sails, and finally the modern oil-burning vessel driven by a screw. If today an expedition arrived at some still unexplored Shangri-La in New Guinea or on the upper Amazon, it would probably be the aeroplane which the native artist would fix on as the symbol of the white man. Ethiopia abounds with drawings showing the arrival of Italian bombers during Mussolini's invasion of 1935.

Next it was the men who landed from the ships who were noticed, and the emphasis was placed upon those things about them which seemed to the native to be distinctly peculiar: the high and broad-brimmed hats, the strange trousers and jackets, the boots, and the smoking pipes that protruded from the strangers' mouths. Since



Victoria and Albert Museum

BENGAL MINIATURE, PAINTED ABOUT 1760 BY DIP CHAND, SHOWS A SETTLER SMOKING A HOOKAH AND ATTENDED BY HIS SERVANTS IN THE MANNER OF AN INDIAN MAHARAJAH. HE IS THOUGHT TO BE DR. WILLIAM FULLARTON, A SCOT FROM AYRSHIRE AND SECOND SURGEON AT FORT WILLIAM.

Pictures from a selection made by John Maass



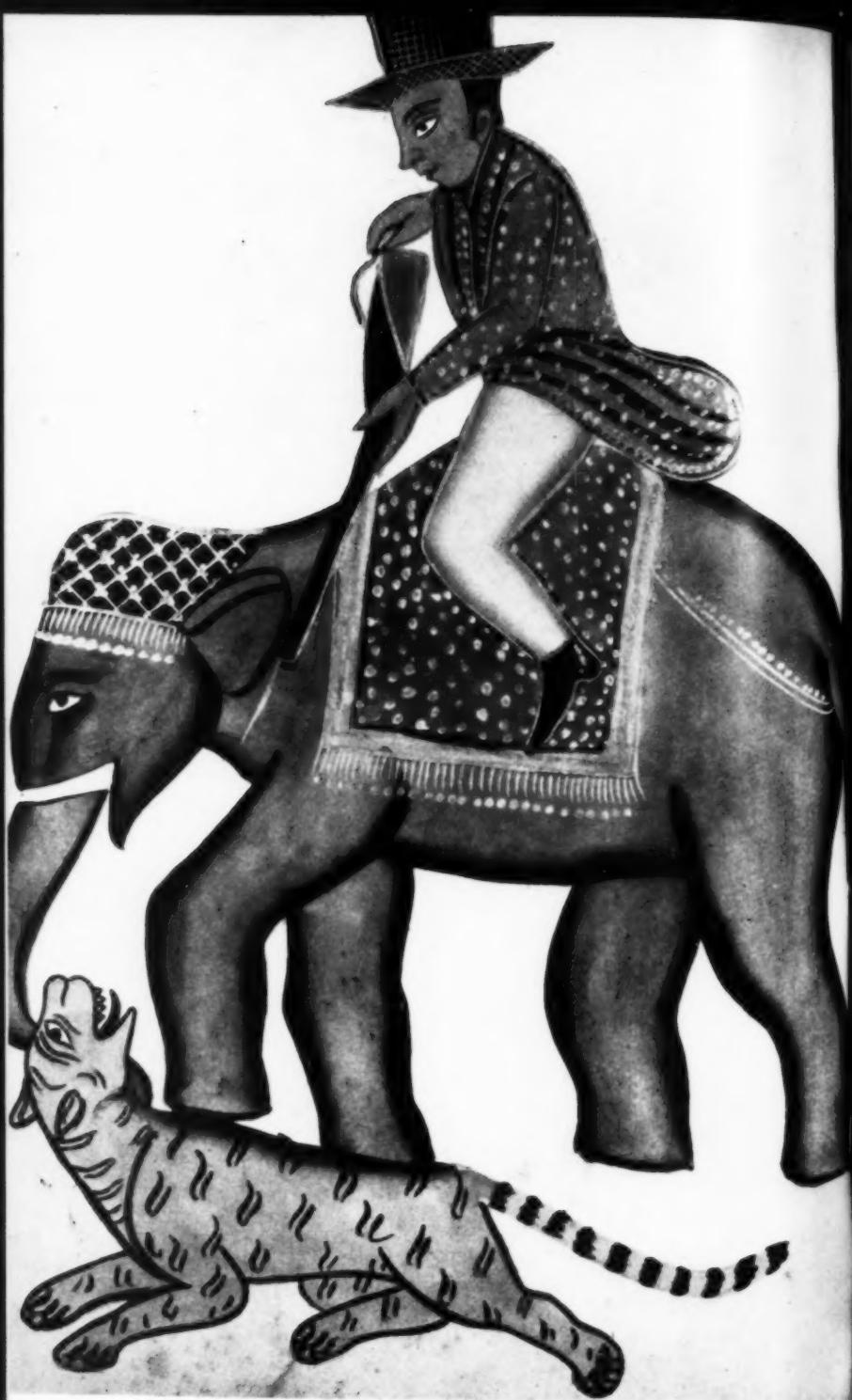
2. TIPU'S TIGER, THE SIX-FOOT 'TIGY' OF TIPU SAHIB, SULTAN OF MYSORE. IT WAS CAPTURED AT SERINGAPATAM IN 1799 AND SENT TO THE EAST INDIA COMPANY.
THE TIGER, CAPTURED AT SERINGAPATAM IN 1799 AND SENT TO THE EAST INDIA COMPANY.

Victoria and Albert Museum

2. TIPU'S TIGER, THE SIX-FOOT 'FOX' OF TIPU SAHIB, SULTAN OF MYSORE. IT WAS CAPTURED AT NEERINGAPATTAM IN 1799 AND SENT TO THE EAST INDIA COMPANY.
THE TIGER WAS KEPT IN A CAGE AT THE RESIDENCE OF THE GOVERNOR OF BOMBAY.



3. A CHINESE COURT ARTIST'S PAINTING ON SILK OF A BAND OF MUSICIANS ACCOMPANYING TWO WESTERN DIGNITARIES. PROBABLY AT CANTON.
Private Collection, Mr. and Mrs. Reginald Palmer



アフリカ人

AFTER J.

Victoria and Albert Museum



New York Public Library, Print Room

AFTER JAPAN WAS OFFICIALLY OPENED IN 1854, YOKOHAMA ARTISTS RECORDED THE ACTIVITIES AND TYPES OF FOREIGN SIGHTSEERS LIKE THIS AMERICAN COUPLE VIEWING A MONKEY.



University of Pennsylvania Museum



Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum, Cologne

6. WOODEN FIGURE OF A NUN FROM BRAZZAVILLE IN FRENCH EQUATORIAL AFRICA.
 7. WOODEN FIGURE OF A SCHOOLMISTRESS FROM DAHOMEY ON THE GUINEA COAST.
- THESE WOMEN CAME WITH THE FRENCH SETTLERS TO EDUCATE AND PROSELYTISE AT THE
END OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.



By courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum

THE BRONZE STATUE OF A SIXTEENTH-CENTURY MUSKETEER WAS CAST IN BENIN ON THE SLAVE COAST, AFTER THE PORTUGUESE HAD ARRIVED A CENTURY EARLIER.



9. A LOANGO CARVER SHAPED THIS DRUM SUPPORTED BY THE FIGURE OF A SAILOR CLUTCHING HIS BOTTLE AND GLASS (Peabody Museum, Salem, Massachusetts).

the Japanese and Chinese were small men, they tended to represent Europeans as very tall, massive, and hairy. Red hair amazed them to such an extent that they began to conceive that all Europeans were red-haired, or at any rate red-hair prone. Thus the Chinese term for white foreigners: 'red devils.'

In the early days there appears to have been very little attempt at direct portraiture. No doubt at first the native had difficulty in distinguishing one white man from another, and so he tended to represent them identically, like soldiers in uniform. (Might not our own artists do the same thing if the hordes from Mars ever did arrive?) Yet even in the most primitive work, it is not difficult to recognise the nationality of the Europeans who are depicted; the Frenchman's kepi is very clearly shown and so is the long face of the blonde Englishman. In this respect, the native artists were hardly inferior to their European contemporaries. The engravings published in most of the explorers' books in nineteenth-century Europe make all blacks look pretty much the same, and there is a general tendency to exaggerate their wildness and fierceness. 'Blackamoors' was a generic term, and a round woolly head with two round white-rimmed eyes was taken as a fair likeness of all Africans and of South Sea Islanders as well.

The gun, of course—whether the antique musket or the newer rifle—is a major theme in native illustration of the whites. The gun set the white man apart; it was his special and terrible magic, the source of his devastating power. Its details are drawn with the greatest attention: hammer, lock, barrel, and butt. Possibly there may have been an ulterior motive here: it is one of the most widespread beliefs of primitive peoples—and not such a far-fetched one at that—that by drawing an object or making a model of it you can to some extent possess it and exorcise its magic.

After the gun, other details come in, and we enter the stage where the native artist becomes familiar with white men—familiar enough to give separate individuals the sort of half-mocking and gleeful nicknames that school children attach to their teachers and to observe their foibles and their habits. In Africa the settler is increasingly shown with bottle and glass in hand; considerable attention is given to the details of his clothing—his buttons and buttonholes, for instance

Image of the White Man

—to the cut of his beard, and to the umbrella he carries to protect himself from the tropical sun and rain.

This is the period when definite portraits of individuals appear. The West African figure of the nineteenth-century sailor (9) is undoubtedly a portrait, and so is the hookah-smoking Bengal colonist of somewhat earlier date. The more advanced Indian and Far Eastern artists were naturally much quicker to recognise the Europeans' failings than their simple African contemporaries were, but it is still not an unfriendly picture.

Portraiture of white women seems to have posed for the early African artists a problem they never quite overcame. It was seldom that a white woman accompanied the explorers and the military expeditions, and consequently she was a rarity. But even when she did arrive with the missionaries and the first settlers, the white woman was not easy to portray. Her voluminous clothes made it difficult for the artist to know the physical details of her body, and no doubt he was prepared to expect anything from the denizens of the outer world. Then, too, one must remember that a woman occupied a decidedly inferior position in tribal life; whether white or black, she was hardly a worthy subject for the artist. It was the man who had the power. Thus in many of the early native drawings and carvings she makes her rare appearances swathed in skirts that reach to the ground, almost bustless and hipless, and her face very often might be the face of a man.

There are exceptions of course. Nothing could be more delightful than the mischievous wood carving (7) of a teacher in French West Africa. Here is the schoolmistress we all know, spinsterish, strait-laced, disapproving—and yet we have a great affection for her. The large ears are certainly unkind, and perhaps the nose and the mouth are exaggerated, but all the rest we recognise instantly from the fashions of *la belle époque*: the straw hat, the high collar, the ruffles on the blouse, the muttonchop sleeves, the wasp waist, and the narrow skirt. She comes, of course, from Paris and the Seine, but alas, one feels she never attended any of those rip-roaring Maupassant summer-evening parties on the river; she was right here in the Tropics trying to teach these woolly-headed little brats (whom she loved) the Code Napoléon.

In the Far East, as well, we notice a certain division between the artist's treatment of his own and white women. His own, whether she be Japanese geisha or Moslem houri, is all grace, airiness, and delicate sensuousness. One is never left in an instant's doubt that her rôle in life is to please men. The white woman seen through Far Eastern eyes is a more formidable figure. It is true that in the picture of the American couple looking at the monkey (5) the lady has been given a pert and lively face and a cluster of roguish curls that peep out of her bonnet, but she grasps her walking stick in a way no geisha could ever do, and her crinoline is the height of fashionable decorum.

In the main, we have been dealing here with the first or, at any rate, the early contacts between whites and coloured men. It was the period of innocence, of unselfconsciousness, of experiment, and of intense curiosity. The native artist was still true to his own environment; he observed directly and without fear, and because he had no knowledge of other skills and cultures that were more sophisticated than his own, he did not imitate.

This was just a brief interlude in the world, and it could not possibly last. The coloured artist, once he made contact with the whites, soon saw that he must put his innocence and his tribal life behind him and accept in exchange what Professor Lips called the 'doubt and calculation' implicit in the feverish life of the white world.

The coloured races no doubt have a good deal to reproach us with in our dominion over them through the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries; and the loss of so much of their native art has certainly been one of the serious casualties, even though they have willingly connived at it themselves—at least to the extent of debasing their art by trying to please the European patrons and, more latterly, the hordes of tourists. The tide, however, has now turned. As the Red Indian GI is supposed to have exclaimed as he landed on the Normandy beaches on D-day, "Columbus, here I come!" In the past decade, India, Burma, and vast areas of Africa have won their independence, and the white man has been obliged to retreat from China and much of South-east Asia. Perhaps we are soon to see a new sort of pictorial art: the impression of the white artist recording the coloured invasion—a peaceful invasion we hope—of the West.

Image of the White Man

Meanwhile it is interesting to see that on the first contact between the two groups of races the coloured man so often looked upon the whites not too unkindly, not as a threatening monster but as an enlightened and benevolent extension of himself.

"Here, after you with my ELIZABETHAN, Daddy." That plaintive cry must have sounded at many thousands of breakfast tables these past thirteen years. For over that period *Elizabethan* (originally Collins Magazine) has alone filled the need for a really good monthly for the young of every age between roughly ten and a hundred. A host of distinguished contributors includes such names as Edward Blishen, John Davenport, Barbara Euphan-Todd, Siriol Hugh-Jones, Spike Milligan, James Morris, Ronald Searle, Noel Streatfeild, J. C. Trewin, Kaye Webb, Sandy Wilson . . .

Furthermore, *Elizabethan* also gives the young a chance to see their own work published, to voice their opinions in the lively correspondence columns, and to exchange letters with other readers all over the world. It also runs an orchestra which holds concerts three times a year during holidays at the Royal Academy of Music.

Elizabethan costs 2s. monthly (postage 4d. extra) and can be ordered through any newsagent or direct from the publishers at 2 Breems Buildings, Chancery Lane, E.C.4. Anyone at all seriously concerned with the question of what the young read know about it.

The Swift River People

BY JOHN D. STEWART

IN Central Africa there is a sad and desolate tract of country which is called Swift River after its only notable feature. It was deep in my District—the District where they left me alone and unpromoted for thirty-three years, until my longed-for retirement from the Service.

I had made the mistake, always fatal to an administrative career, of over-specialisation, and that is why—they said—they left me there so long. They told me that I knew that country so well that no one could replace me there, but this thin official flattery was of no value to me. The fact was that I happened to be a bachelor, and well they knew that no family man could have been banished to that notorious place.

Throughout the Service I became known as Bardac of Swift River, notwithstanding the fact that my District far exceeded the limits of that territory. The title had its content of amused contempt, as those who know the Service will not deny. The name stuck, and I stuck, and we saw the end of each other, Swift River and I.

The river, a remote tributary of the Congo, hurls itself down from the bare red tablelands of Triassic rock and zigzags furiously and bloodily through the rain-eroded foothills. A thousand steep gullies gorge it with water and soil, leaving its whole basin barren. A stunted carob tree grows sparsely there, a ragged and fruitless fig, a thin scrub of cactus, and thorns fit for a crown. But the whole terrain carries neither crop nor cattle, nor any useful thing. As for game, there is scarcely cover for a scorpion. The baboons pass swiftly through. The wart-hog snuffles for ponds and digs for buried water, finds neither, and hurries on his way.

And yet there was a People living there. The remnant of a People,

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I should say, subsisting in this desert without trade or sortie. And they were not, as the latter-day idealists of Europe are so prone to hope, heroic conquerors of savage nature. They were hard-pressed and hungry folk, with all the amorality of poverty, and they hated their homeland as I did, and were held there by fear and ignorance alone.

The Swift River People were of little use to themselves, but such were their straits and extremes that they had proved useful to more than one anthropologist. Herscholdt, who first studied them, used their culture to demonstrate the adaptability of Man, the response to the challenge of desolation and starvation. He it was who first called these people 'The Esquimaux of the Equator.'

The Swift River People—the Kalaru, as they called themselves—were originally an outcast tribe of that most ancient race the Northern Bushmen. It seems probable that they had a long heredity of delinquency, such that no race—not even their own—could harbour them. I have often thought that the mark of Cain was on them.

But no one can be sure of their history. The histories of Europe herself are most palpably meretricious. How much further is truth to seek in the histories of Africa, endlessly recited, twisted and distorted from mouth to mouth, and degraded to fantasy in a generation?

However it came about, the Kalaru lived shunned and unenvied in the Swift River basin. Their isolation was originally imposed on them by neighbouring tribes, but they came to accept it and to enforce it on themselves. In all my time with them, not a man left the territory, for even the briefest excursion beyond the watershed was tabu to them. To set a foot outside the Chief's jurisdiction was to insult and threaten him, and the offender would have been put to death with all promptitude and pleasure.

As a result, their minds had become as stunted by self-complacent ignorance as were their bodies by endogamy. A race less pleasant and comely I never encountered in all my forty years in Africa. Inbreeding had written its story upon these wretched people, and the deformed, the halt, and the blind were in a majority. Notably, many of them were born with fingers missing, and a surprising number had the so-called 'wall' eyes, the light blue iris in the black face giving them a fearsome and hideous appearance. Their death-rate

in the year 1910 was the highest Herscholdt had found in the continent. Their worst enemies, according to him, were congenital malformations, chronic deficiencies of diet, and complete proneness to infections.

In my hopeful youth there, I offered them inoculation and supplementary foods, but they refused these with suspicion and hatred. The Kalaru saw enemies on every hand, and that very quality, which was the keynote of their tortured existence, was the one enemy which the great Herscholdt missed—or, perhaps he had to lay it aside because of its intractability to scientific evaluation. It is not susceptible to proof, but at the same time it is indubitable, that the Kalaru were ridden by fear and superstition to an almost incredible degree, and that these carried lethal whims and hazards in their wake.

Herscholdt never saw, as I have seen, a number of Kalaru turn on one of their fellows as instantaneously and inexplicably as a band of baboons, and plunge all their spears merrily into his writhing body. Herscholdt never watched them calling on the warm corpse to follow them, returning to it, caressing it, and wailing over it in simulated grief. Nor did he see, then, how a bird passed overhead or a fish swam by, and fratricide and tragedy vanished in a flash as the murderers skipped away, shouting and laughing in the chase. Ah, yes, they were degraded, debilitated, riddled with disease, no doubt! But the most prevalent, and the most fatal, of all their diseases, Dr. Herscholdt, was their propensity to murder!

It was the hunting methods of the Kalaru, on which I had published a brief paper, which attracted the Biendocq Expedition to Swift River in the year 1933.

River fish—principally a large, coarse perch—and certain birds formed almost the sole diet of these people. Professor Biendocq held that they ate nothing else whatsoever. (I had, with my longer experience, known them to savour insects and to lick wild honey from their hands, yet the Professor, I was sad to see, thought fit to omit this part of my evidence from his book. He was only too pleased to use my explanations of the local trapping methods, by which I saved his Expedition many months of tedious and costly research.)

Such is the mountain rainfall and its unhampered run-off that the Swift River is never clear, but turbid and opaque at all seasons.

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Thus, the perch are never visible in their natural habitat, and cannot be speared by sight. Nevertheless, the Kalaru contrive to spear them. Pressed by necessity, they have developed a fishing method which I named 'blind spearing,' wherein a fish spear is rapidly and constantly oscillated at a break in the rapids. They have produced their own peculiar technique for doing this, and, most interestingly, taken advantage of their large proportion of blind men to execute it.

The form of the fish spear and the hip harness used for its oscillation are both unique, and cannot be explained without drawings. (These may be found in plenty in *The Swift River Culture* by Armand Biendocq—all based, with scant acknowledgement, on sketches of my own.)

But stranger even than the fishing are the fowling methods of the Kalaru.¹ Professor Biendocq has called them 'the strangest known to mankind.' May the good God forgive me, but the only time I have felt love for these people was when I watched them, with joyful screams, pulling the birds out of the sky. I must attempt to explain this miracle of ingenuity.

The bare soil of the basin sets up thermal currents which waft the winged ants high above the earth. For this reason, the sky above the valley is crowded from dawn to dusk with swifts—swifts of a large species, powerful in flight. These birds nest in deep crevices in the inaccessible cliffs and swoop straight into them from the wing. Since they are never seen to alight on the ground nor in a tree—con-

¹ Recent researches indicate that early Man did not hunt birds of the swift or swallow families. The painted rock shelter of Las Figuras in the province of Cadiz offers recognisable depictions of some scores of species of birds, painted there by Mousterian Man. All the birds shown—mostly ducks and waders—abound there today, as they so evidently did twenty thousand years ago. All of them, we know, were desiderata of the chase, for that was the reason for painting them.

The soffit of the entrance to this cave is plastered now, as it no doubt was then, with the bottle-shaped nests of the Red-rumped Swallow. Yet no swallow, nor any similar bird, appears in the frescoes.

The fanciful might take pleasure in speculating that the Swift River People suffered retribution for outraging this immemorial tabu.

This, and a hundred other delicate facets of his subject, were completely overlooked by the eminent anthropologist, Professor Armand Biendocq, who has won himself so much acclaim for his incomplete, hurried, and sentimental study of my people in the Swift River Basin.—J. d'A. B.

triving to drink and even to pair in full flight—they offer no opportunity for trapping or liming. The Kalaru knew neither the bow nor the sling; they had no blowpipe, no throwing-stick; yet they had found a way, under the spur of hunger, to prey on these birds.

They invented, or by chance discovered, a simple kite made of delicate wickerwork. They found that they could fly it in the air currents, and that the swifts had no fear of it. No doubt, for generations they baited it with flies. No doubt, since the air was full of flies, the bait was ignored. The Kalaru who first put a straw across a hair noose and tied it to the tail of his kite was the Blériot, the Curie, of his poor country!

Within seconds he must have had a swift by the neck, for he had found their fatal weakness. Loth as they are to land, these birds are unable to resist straws, feathers, or any airborne debris which they need for the fabrication of their nests. Thus the Kalaru hauled them out of the air in hundreds.

In spring and summer they ate the swifts raw. Towards autumn, when the birds took less readily, they preserved them by toasting them until the feathers formed a carbon casing for the flesh. On this food and raw perch they passed the winter, and eked out their joyless existence.

It was their evident joylessness, not usually associated with the simple, primitive life, which prompted Madame Biendocq to attempt the conversion of the Kalaru to Christianity. She hinted that it was high time that such an attempt were made, but I told her frankly that after my first year with them I had never felt it worth while to tell them that views and beliefs contrary to their own existed. With a people who scarcely knew to take shelter from the rain it would not strike me as profitable to embark on the abstractions of comparative theology. I have always held the view—and still, unrepentantly, do—that religious beliefs without a good basis of understanding are invalid and worthless. There is no more merit in blind faith than in blind courage.

Mme. Biendocq did not agree with me. She pointed out that the Church welcomed little children innocent of the deeper truths of its tenets. These savages, she said, would be acceptable in the same category. I pointed out that the Kalaru were only qualified

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for this category by their ignorance, that they were equipped for sins which little children could not commit, and that I had doubts about the warrant for inaugurating a second class of Christian. But I had scant inclination to argue with this religious lady. A long experience of such persons, both in Europe and in Africa, has taught me that a peaceful and liberal man has but one course when he meets them—to opt out with his feet.

Mme. Biendocq began her mission on the two young men, Kobo and Golura, whom I had recruited for the Expedition as bearers and bodyguards. They were—and this is no great compliment—a little above the average of Kalaru intelligence. It fell to me, of course, to interpret the lady's exhortations, which were simple and unequivocal. She offered them an everlasting, idle, musical and peaceful life if they accepted her faith, and an endless torture by slow burning if they did not. Her quarry, long since inured to all astonishment by the Expedition's behaviour and equipment, capitulated to Mother Church with exasperating rapidity. Mme. Biendocq, I could see, was briefly tempted to create a little doubt in them, if only for the purpose of quelling it, but she resisted this and accepted their conversion and baptised them. I can remember reflecting—ah, yes, unkindly !—how greed had made both parties credulous and eager—her holy greed for souls and celestial credit, and theirs, more mundane but nonetheless acute, for profit and advantage and unearned reward. I could see that the Christian careers of Kobo and Golura would be short indeed, and the event corroborated me.

Had I but guessed that Mme. Biendocq's interference would lead to the extinction of this strange tribe, and that her husband's researches (whose scope and value I beg leave to question) were to be the last ever made, I should have expelled the Expedition from my District of Swift River.

How could I have guessed? Ah, yes—one can guess. With my experience of Central Africa I should have borne in mind always that a sick remnant of a People, living in a delicate and special balance with their environment and with each other, may face a deadly danger in the smallest innovation. I knew this, in general. But, as so often happens, I failed to apply my knowledge to the case before me—the case of the Kalaru People. And for that I shall live out

my retirement—what remains of it—in remorse and despondency, whatsoever extraneous honours (and so far, there have been none) may be showered upon me in the future.

The events which followed on the Expedition's departure were related to me some months later by the Witch Doctor Kaguru. That is to say, I reconstructed the story from the few salient facts which emerged from the tissue of lies which he told me. I had been absent for three months, for I had felt it my duty to escort the Expedition down to the coast. Those three months proved fatal to my People.

The convert Kobo, whom Mme. Biendocq had left only a packet of unillustrated tracts, a string of holy beads, and a small metal casting depicting a cumbersome murder, went back to the now derelict camp site to comb the ground. There he found a gold—or gold-plated—powder box of the flat kind, known, I believe, as a flapjack or compact, and fashioned in the form of a bi-valvular mollusc. He secreted this find in his loin pouch, fearful that it might be claimed by the Chief, or by me. Whenever he found himself alone, we may be sure, he extracted it and handled it until, one day, he touched the button by chance, and the flapjack sprang open with a puff of powder. That would have sent him running for half a kilometre, but he returned, alas, stalked the box, and found courage to seize it again. Then he saw in the mirror in the lid a sight which filled his heart with horror.

At this point I must explain that there is no standing water in the Swift River basin. There were no vessels, except the ostrich eggs from which the Kalaru drank water—more usually they drank it straight from the fast and muddy streams. There was no metalwork worthy of the name, nor any craft which might result in polished objects. Like all his kinsmen, Kobo had never seen his own face before, and he could not recognise himself in the mirror.

Kobo saw there the face, so well remembered from the day he watched him die, of the father he had lost in his boyhood. He stared at his dead father and his father stared back at him in fear and horror, from the magic jewel in his fist.

Now the Kalaru may be classified as Ancestor Worshippers, but, their memories being pitifully short, their fear and reverence is offered to immediate forebears and to the dead members of their families.

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The dead are not considered a benign influence, but rather a constant threat and warning of pain and death to come. Kobo would have presumed that his late father had come back to punish him for meddling with foreign magic. Terrified, he ran to Golura, his fellow Christian, to unload on to him his share of the blame.

When he told Golura what was in the golden box we may be sure that he was not doubted. These people had the quality of believing everything fantastic on a first hearing, and reserving their scepticism for matters of self-evident commonsense. But Golura had, of course, to look in the mirror too, and there he found his own dead father, squinting and leering up at him.

God alone knows how they reconciled this dual tenancy of the box, but they reached some agreement as to sharing it, and hid it in a hollow tree, known to them both. They kept their secret, shed their Christianity, and reverted to the tribal routine of fishing, quarrelling, birding and capricious copulation.

But Kobo could not keep away from the stolen fruit, and his nocturnal sorties awoke the suspicions of his wife, Aka. She followed him one night and watched him take the treasure from the hollow tree, worship it, and replace it. When he left, she ran to the tree and found the flapjack.

Aka must have fingered it until it opened, and then, let us suppose, she raised it to her face to smell the powder. (It is a universal quality of primitive women that they distrust their own odour and seek any other, better or worse, with which to cloak it.) We may suppose that Aka rubbed the glass with her thumb and saw in it a rolling, bloodshot eye, two inches from her own. She thrust the box to arm's length and saw there her long dead sister, an ugly woman, far older than herself, staring at her with a blank and baleful gaze.

Aka must have run back to the village with great dread in her breast. To her, it was beyond doubt that her husband had been mating with her sister in life, in the face of all tabu, and, far worse, that even in death he still hid that woman apart and visited her in private. Violation of the dead was, in the terrible calendar of the Kalaru, the greatest crime of all.

Aka ran to the hut of Tua, wife of Golura. She told Tua of her

discovery, and Tua looked in the box. There she found one of her own sisters, also long since dead, and old and ugly now.

It puzzled Tua, and perhaps piqued her somewhat, that Kobo should have continued mating even after death with this ill-favoured old woman. She had not been aware of the liaison when her sister had been alive. She reflected that Kobo had been very young at the time, and decided that her sister had seduced him in the indiscriminating onrush of his puberty. That would have explained it. And it would explain, too, why she, Tua, in spite of superior attractions and much propinquity, had never received any sexual aggression from the necrophilic Kobo !

At this point in her deductions, perhaps, her husband Golura strode into the hut, snatched the box from her hand, and struck her in the belly with the butt of his fishing spear.

Golura upbraided the two women. He told them that the box was his, and great magic, unfit for women to defile. His father lived in it—yes, his father, he insisted, whom he visited every night at the tree where the box was hidden !

It then became clear to Tua that her husband was a liar, and a liar of that aggravated category which does not seek a likelihood to cloak deceit, but lies by violence alone. Such people engender the hatred of savage and sophisticate alike. Golura, his wife knew, sought to hide the persistent ravishing of her sister's corpse, whom she had seen with her own eyes in the box. Such a man was unfit to live.

When Golura left the hut, all this was discussed between the two injured women in the least propitious atmosphere for logic. We may be sure that Aka found comfort in fanning the fury of Tua, and vice versa. The Kalaru, strange and solitary as they were, were not without some common human traits.

How they took the flapjack from Golura again I cannot tell, but next day they presented their case jointly before the Chief, and offered the golden box as evidence. There was only one penalty for the crimes of Kobo and Golura—immediate death. Such are the Kalaru that both wives begged that their husbands should suffer it.

Jalua, last Chief of the Kalaru, was not an hereditary ruler. The tribe had not yet reached even that senseless stage of political development.

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Their chiefs were elected, or selected, by portent and magic. This one was neither better nor worse than previous chiefs, but he was, as is so usual, far worse than the average tribesman, for his ignorance and brutality had had the fullest freedom to flower.

The Chief had a grievance against Kobo and Golura. They had accepted allegiance to the foreign intruders, dividing their loyalty, and learning new and dangerous things. Also, they had made more out of the Expedition than he, their Chief, had been able to make. He was only too glad, therefore, to have them hauled before the tribe, saying that if a man's wife does not know his deserts, then who does? Kobo and Golura were ceremonially pole-axed by the Witch Doctor, impaled and hoisted on thirteen fish spears, and then dismembered to the time of a ritual chant.

As soon as life and interest had left this spectacle, Chief Jalua called the plaintiff Aka close to him. Then he snatched the box from her hand, kicking her away with his bare heel. The flapjack sprang open in his clutch and the sun shone from the mirror into his eyes. Then, according to the Witch Doctor, he jumped up from his throne, roaring, and raised his arm to throw the box away. But he saw the little sun dance away instead, skimming over the assembled people, across the trodden earth, and up into the trees. At this, he took courage and looked in the mirror.

Jalua recognised the image as himself, for it had a Chief's headdress, the only one, naturally enough, in the country. The sight chilled him with fury. It was forbidden to make an image of anyone—least of all, of the Chief. There could be only one purpose for such an image—the primeval one of transfixing it with thorns and so cursing and killing the original. These lying women, who had sought to hide from him the true tenant of the box, had tried to contrive his death!

Jalua, therefore, had Aka and Tua killed there and then before him. But he still felt the chill of fear. He called Taguru the Witch Doctor to follow him, and retreated with the golden box into his great hut, kicking and cuffing his women out of the door.

Jalua, with his throne based on flimsy and arbitrary rights, and a fund of ill-will deployed against him after years of cruel rule, trusted no one in his tribe. But the man he distrusted least was his Witch

Doctor, his partner and co-beneficiary in the crimes and spoils of government. 'No bishop, no king' runs true even in the most primitive of cultures—as does its converse.

Even so, when Jalua saw the Witch Doctor entering his hut, his face, whitened with bird's dung and beeswax, gleaming hideously in the murk, and the bloodstained pole-axe bouncing at his thigh, he might have hesitated. The evil of that priest, as I recall, was absolute, and unrelieved by any atom of a saving grace. He was the fullest and finest flowering of Kalaru morality.

The Chief told the Witch Doctor that he had seen his own image in the box and, grasping it tightly in his fist, he held it out for confirmation. Taguru looked in the mirror, and there he found his own face, unmistakable in its sacred paint. This sight had a clear meaning to Taguru. The Chief's face had been there; his own had superseded it; hence he was now the Chief. He rose and moved round behind Jalua, as though to study the mirror over the Chief's shoulder. Once there, he swung his pole-axe swiftly and cleft the Chief's skull.

Taguru knew that the whole tribe, including the royal wives, would welcome the Chief's death, but he still had cause for misgiving when he walked out on the platform to announce it. Would they accept him, the Witch Doctor, as their new chief? He held the magic box, his title deed and authority, in his hand. He called all the people to his feet and told them that Jalua was dead at last, and that the magic box had designated him, Taguru, as Chief of the Kalaru People. His image was here, inside it. Let all men look upon it and accept the portent. He passed the box down to the elders in the front rank of the audience.

The first man to handle the box stared and scowled. He found in it one of his dead brothers. He could not be sure which one it was, for he had had three, all of whom had died in youth and violence. But since he had fallen heir to them all, the chieftainship was his—and, perhaps, trebly so. He turned to stare haughtily at his neighbours, and passed them the box with a gesture of defiance.

The second man found his dead father in the box, his face animated and excited, the lips mouthing silent, forceful words. Clearly, the chieftainship was his.

The third man saw no one that he knew, but it was clear to him

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that the Witch Doctor's claim was false. The fourth man and several others found their dead antecedents there, as the golden box passed from hand to hand, and the women waited nervously, clutching their little children against their thighs.

Suddenly, a man stepped forward, turned to face the tribe, and announced himself Chief of the Kalaru. The Witch Doctor, from his balcony, struck him down where he stood.

A terrible carnage must have followed this. Claims and counter-claims were screamed from all sides, fish spears flashed in the sun, and blood flowed freely until few men remained alive. Those few scattered to the scant cover of the forest, every one of them the enemy of all. That night they called out their women to join them, with the strange fluting cries which varied from family to family.

From that day onwards the survivors spent their days and nights in ceaseless skirmish and ambush, stalking and murdering each other. The perch swam freely down the Swift River, for the blind fishermen, although they made no personal claims, had taken sides with this man or that, and were the easiest and the first to be killed. Even the swifts swept overhead in safety, for no man dared to fix his eyes on the heavens when every bush might hold his murderer.

And so it continued for many days, every man impelled by the certain justice of his claim, by the evidence of his own eyes. The golden box of Mme. Biendocq, the missionary, confirming him who held it, passed from the dead hand to the living, as murder followed murder. Even the women and children were stalked and slaughtered, for false claimants to high and holy office—as the history of Europe teaches us so clearly—must be destroyed root, trunk and branch.

Taguru the Witch Doctor survived by his superior cunning. The basis of his vocation was shrewd assessment and anticipation of his fellowmen. No hampering harem of women for him! No little children to cry in the night and betray his hiding place. He took with him but one young man, his favourite son, Tembu the Blue-eyed; a boy of some cunning and dexterity, as I remember him, albeit with but two fingers on each hand. They stood off in the high ground and fed on termite grubs and queen ants, and listened every night to the screams of the dying.

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Taguru struck down, swiftly and silently, whomsoever passed close to his retreat, until he found the magic box on the body of one of his victims. Thereafter, he told me, he took no further part nor risk in the war, but lay in hiding and left the Kalaru to exterminate themselves.

To be just, there was nothing else that he could have done. There was, by that time, no possibility of altering the fatal course of events. Trapped in their tabu territory like gladiators in the arena, they circled and fought without hope of respite or escape, until their night cries dwindled and gave way to the dreadful silences of apprehension.

One night when Taguru and his son Tembu the Blue-eyed lay shivering in the hills, the Witch Doctor took out the magic box, opened it, and held it up to the moonlight to confirm his great destiny yet once more. The boy, who was in a state of tension and terror, snatched it from him, fended him off, and stared at the image in the lid.

Tembu pointed out that the image had two blue eyes. He knew, of course, that he himself had that rare condition. He said, too, that it lacked a front tooth, and that he had lost one also. And then he claimed, said Taguru, that the image lacked a wing to one nostril, as did he himself! He raised a finger, as was his wont, to confirm his loss, and shouted out that the finger had intruded on the image and scratched its withered nose! The boy considered all this for a little while, and made other tests, and then he told Taguru that he himself was the only image in the box, and that he was therefore the true Chief of the Kalaru.

Taguru said nothing. He feigned sleep for some hours, and when at last he heard his son snoring, he rose quietly and struck him on the brow with a heavy stone. The boy rolled on to his back, he told me, and then his limbs sank to the ground and his bladder emptied. Taguru walked fast and far away, for the dawn was at hand, and the vultures would soon see the corpse and form a great tower in the sky to tell all men that death was there.

Meanwhile I, Bardac, was returning from the coast, depressed as always after one of my rare excursions by the dreary prospect of Swift River before me. Professor Biendocq had charged me with the verification of innumerable details, which meant more work for

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me and more credit for him. Mme. Biendocq had importuned me with the loss of a powder box of great intrinsic and greater sentimental value. It had been a morning-gift, she said slyly, in the ancient Celtic tradition, after her wedding night with the Professor (an occasion which it pained me to imagine). Would I search for it unceasingly? I pictured all those empty hectares of sandy scrub land and assured her that I would do my best. These Biendocqs, I reflected, had interpreted the term 'civil servant' with childish exactness, so that servitude and civility were all that they expected from me.

Some days after my return the Witch Doctor crawled up to my residence. He was in the last stages of starvation and lived but for a few days, during which he outlined this terrible story. He would not tell me, even then, where he had put the magic box, but he surprised me, at the end, by entreating me to collect the bones of the son he had murdered, Tembu the Blue-eyed, and to secrete them in a sacred tree. Then he decided to die, and died.

I did not find the box on his thin body, so I presumed that he had hidden it elsewhere. After some perfunctory searching in the nearest bushes, I wrote to Mme. Biendocq and told her that she need never hope to see her precious morning-gift again. She wrote back curtly, expressing her deep sorrow and her regret that her property had been lost in, and remained in, territory for which I was responsible! I put the hateful matter out of my mind.

I climbed to the hilltop which the dying Witch Doctor had described, but I found no bones there, nor on any nearby hilltop. This puzzles me to this day, for there is no animal or bird in the region which would devour or transport bones of human size. Either the Witch Doctor had lied, which was most likely, or the boy left for dead had recovered and left the place. Since the Witch Doctor was a past master in murder, this seemed to me unlikely.

Some years later, by a most curious chance, I found the golden box—found it in all the empty, silent wilderness where no one lives now, nor ever will live again!

I had shifted my residence to a populated region, and I was passing through the Swift River country with my hunting rifle when I saw, some little way ahead, a solitary large creature in a clearing in the

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scrub. At first I thought, foolishly, that it was a human being—a small man squatting there, decked in some weird headdress. But I crept closer and identified it as a Mandrill, the heaviest and most dangerous of the baboon tribe. I slipped my safety catch and continued to approach.

I was surprised and, indeed, alarmed at the proximity which the beast permitted me. Not thirty yards from him I raised my head, peered through a leafless thorn, and laid my sights on him. I saw then the reason for his inattention to me—he was intent on his toilet!

He was unusually intent, with his thick neck arched sharply and his long black snout laid close against his chest. His lips were extended in a grotesque funnel and emitted rapid cries and clickings. In the absence of females such behaviour was strange indeed. I saw that he had one hand on the ground before him, as support, and that the other was held round behind him, below his stub tail, in an attitude both uncharacteristic and awkward. Then I saw something glinting in this hand, and I realised that it was the golden box.

The Mandrill bared his yellow fangs and chuckled deep in his throat. He worked his supple mask through a series of hideous expressions. He jumped up and down. I watched him, fascinated, as, for the first and last time in his life, he inspected and admired his obscene, protuberant and vivid fundament. When I fired he leapt high in the air, tossed in convulsions on the sand for a few moments, and then stretched his limbs in death.

I sent the powder box—the morning-gift—to Mme. Biendocq at the first opportunity, by registered post. I enclosed a civil note, wishing her and her husband continued good health and fortune. From that far-off day to this I have never received from that lady one word of acknowledgement.

JEAN D'A. BARDAC,
Brussels.

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Art and Society

BY KENNETH CLARK

LAST year I was asked to speak at the centenary of the Cooper Union in New York on the subject of Art and Society.¹ I was flattered by the invitation but alarmed by the subject. It seemed to unlock a stream of warm air on which generalisations floated like balloons in a captivating, but ultimately rather nauseating, manner. Moreover, I was afraid (wrongly, as it turned out) that my hosts on this festive occasion would expect a note of optimism, whereas my thoughts on the subject were inclined to be gloomy. However, I considered that someone who had spent much of his life, as I have done, in trying to increase the availability and appreciation of works of art by the accepted ways and means, ought occasionally to take a longer view. I therefore tried to look at the relationship of art and society in historical terms, and then attempted to relate my findings—what nineteenth-century writers would have called 'laws'—to the age in which we live.

Art is an extensive word. In this essay I limit it to the branch of art that I know best, the visual arts: and I take this term to cover everything made in response to the feeling that certain events or objects of contemplation, seen or imagined, are so important that they must be recorded; and that certain objects of use are so important that they must be enriched. These two aspects of visual art I refer to as image and ornament. They used to be called 'fine art' and 'applied art,' and in the nineteenth century were severely distinguished from one another. Today we tend to minimise this distinction. We believe that the form-creating instinct can express itself

¹ This paper is made up of the address given at the Cooper Union Centennial in the autumn of 1959 and the Lloyd-Roberts lecture given to the Royal College of Physicians some months later. My thanks are due both to the Chairman of the Trustees of the Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art and to the Board of Censors of the Royal College of Physicians for permission to incorporate the two lectures in this essay.

Art and Society

in both ornament and image; all ornament, however abstract, suggests some visual experience; all images, however factual, reveal some sense of design. Both are forms of order. And both are sacramental. 'What is this sacrament?' as the catechisms says. 'The outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace.' Both image and ornament are revelations of a state of mind and social temper.

Having accepted this basic unity, however, these two branches of visual art show very great differences, especially in their relationship to society, and I shall consider them separately. I think it true to say that all image art of any value has been made by, or on behalf of, a small minority: not necessarily a governing class in a political sense but a governing class in an intellectual and spiritual sense. Since I shall often refer to this minority, I must decide what to call it. Plato's 'governors' is too narrow a term, Rousseau's *volonté generale* is too wide and too mysterious. For the sake of brevity I have referred to it as an *élite*; although in fact it is not elected, and may be drawn from any class of society.

Images are not made for fun. In fact it is almost true to say that all image art of value illustrates or confirms a system of belief held by an *élite*, and very often is employed consciously as a means of maintaining that system. Obvious examples are the theocratic art of Egypt, the Parthenon with its Olympian embodiment of Greek philosophy, the stained glass of Chartres and Bourges illustrating not only Christian legend, but the whole superstructure of patristic theology, the temples of Angkor and Borabadur, the Basilica of Assisi and its Buddhist equivalent Ajanta, the Stanze of Raphael, and so forth, down to David's picture of the Oath of the Horatii. The list could be expanded till in the end it would include most of the greatest visible feats of human imagination and all of those which are in any way related to society and do not depend solely on the genius of an individual artist. It seems that an image achieves the concentration, clarity and rhythmic energy which make it memorable only when it illustrates or confirms what a minority believes to be an important truth.

The images provided for the majority by the *élite* may be more, or less, popular. Franciscan art in the thirteenth century and Baroque

art in the seventeenth century were two attempts to create a new repertoire of images which should be more popular than that which preceded it. Both consciously exploited emotionalism. But the artists who gave the finest expression to those styles—let us say Cimabue and Bernini—were working for a small group of patrons, and were deeply receptive of their ideas. Bernini's Santa Theresa became a popular image; it revealed to the majority a hidden need. But it was Bernini's own invention and in its origin it owed nothing to popular demands. Even the images which we at first believe to have a popular origin—for example those charming woodcuts known as *images d'Epinal*—are for the most part naïve and imperfect memories of images already invented for the élite by such an artist as Phillipe de Champagne. The only exceptions I can think of are those anecdotal strips which simply tell a story, often with the help of balloons of text. Such were the illustrations of late antique MSS., the painting of popular artists like Pacino di Bonaguida, the *Biblia Pauperum* and its derivatives and a number of Japanese scrolls, like the comic animals attributed to Toba Sojo. These, I believe, are the only forms of autochthonous popular image art before the nineteenth century, and I mention them now because they reveal a fundamental characteristic of all popular art: that it is concerned with narration.

At first sight ornament would seem to be a more popular form of expression than image. Ornament has the character of a language—nineteenth-century writers used, quite properly, to speak of the grammar of ornament—and in so far as it is a living language it is accepted almost unconsciously by the majority. However there is this difference, that whereas language seems to have evolved unconsciously from mass needs, a system of ornament has seldom been invented by 'the people.' In fact I can think of only one exception, the pottery of the Mexican Indians which is outstandingly beautiful and does seem to be a genuine popular creation. In Europe good folk ornament turns out almost always to be a cruder rendering of a minority style; and I think the same is true of China, India, Persia and the whole Moslem culture. I would even extend this to the most vital and expressive of all ornament styles—that produced by the so-called folk-wandering peoples. I believe that the finest Scythian ornaments

were by a great artist working for a chief, and that most of what has been discovered in Scandinavia or Scotland is a half-understood imitation of these aristocratic adornments.

In ornament the ulterior motive is less strong than in the image. It does not openly recommend a system. But no one maintains that it exists solely to please the eye, and lacks ulterior motive altogether. It is an assertion of status—whether in a cope or crown or crozier or *portail royale* or precious reliquary. This fact, which has been worked out in detail by Marxist historians, is taken by them as a condemnation of art; and, as everyone knows, Veblen coined for it the expression 'conspicuous waste.' This expression is apt, but I do not find it at all damaging. All art is waste in a material sense; and the idea that things should be made more precious-looking in accordance with the status of the user seems to me entirely fitting. I think that a bishop should have a finer cope than a deacon and that the main portal of a cathedral should be more richly ornamented than the door of a warehouse. I would go further, and say that ornament is inseparable from hierarchy. It is not only the result, but the cause of status. The carvings on the corner capital of the Doge's Palace and the central window of the Palazzo Farnese confer a kind of kingship on those two points of the building. In a democratic building, when all windows are equal, no ornament is permissible; although I understand that the higher executives may have more windows.

So I would deduce from history this first law (in the Ruskinian sense) of the relationship of art and society: that visual art, whether it takes the form of images or ornament, is made by a minority for a minority, and would add this rider, that the image-making part is usually controlled in the interests of a system, and that the ornamental part is usually the index of status.

Created by a minority: yes, but accepted by the majority unquestioningly, eagerly and with a sense of participation. The degree of physical participation in the great popular works of art is hard to assess. We know that in the building of the Gothic cathedrals—Chartres is the most familiar example—whole villages moved to be nearer the work, and men were prepared to learn subsidiary crafts in order to help the professional masons. We can assume that the same was true of Borabadur or Ellora, although the economic status of the

workers may have been different. A parallel in modern life would be the building of a great liner in Clydebank, where the whole life of the town depends on the work. But apart from this active participation, one has only to read the accounts of how in the great ages of artistic creation works of art were brought into existence—the long and serious thought which preceded the commission, the public anxiety about its progress, the joy when it was at last accomplished, and the procession in which it was carried to its destination, to the sound of bells and singing of a *Te Deum*—one has only to come upon such documents, common enough in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, and applicable, surely, to Olympia and the Acropolis of Athens, to recognise that the society of those times needed art, believed without question in the value of art, and participated imaginatively in its making. So this would be my second law: that a healthy and vital relationship between art and society exists when the majority feel that art is absolutely necessary to them, to confirm their beliefs, to inform them about matters of lasting importance, and to make the invisible visible.

Now in saying that this is the *healthiest* relationship between art and society, I must not be understood as saying that these are the *only* circumstances under which good works of art can be produced. Even before 1870 great pictures were painted by individuals who had no relationship with society at all and whose work was distasteful or incomprehensible to the majority. Rembrandt and Turner, in their later phases, are obvious examples. In the history of art, as in all history, nothing poses a more delicate problem of interpretation than the relationship between individual genius and the general will. But even if we believe, as I am inclined to do, that inspiration is more likely to illuminate an individual than a mass and that all the memorable forms of art were originally invented by individuals of genius, we must agree that at certain periods these individuals are isolated, at others they enlist behind them a whole army of assent and participation.

Nor is this direct relationship of need and unquestioning belief certain to produce good art. Artistic faculties are somewhat unequally—we may think unfairly—distributed among the peoples of the globe; and although the relationship may be sound, not all

needs have the same validity. However, I am sufficiently a Ruskinian to believe that when a society, over a long period, produces an art which is lacking in vitality and imaginative power, but which nevertheless seems to be accepted by the majority, there is something wrong with that society.

This brings me back to the part of my opening definition, where I said that art was a sacrament; and I must now consider how an inward and spiritual grace can be given outward and visible form. The answer is, through symbols. A symbol is a sort of analogy in the physical sphere for some spiritual or intellectual experience. Usually it is the concentration of several related experiences so complex that they cannot be expressed in any rational form, and so intense that a physical symbol suggests itself unconsciously. We know from the saints of every religion that the most poignant spiritual experiences demand expression by physical analogies, and, in spite of Pascal and Spinoza, we may infer that spiritual experiences which remain abstract are not usually very intense. Symbols may start as a result of private revelations, but their value in art depends on the degree to which they can be felt and accepted by others. In fact nearly all intensely felt symbols have some universal quality, which makes them comprehensible even when their maker believes them to be peculiar to himself. But it is also true that the sacramental character of art is far more easily achieved when the principal objects of belief have already been given a symbolic form which is generally recognised and accepted: in other words, when there is an established mythology and iconography.

In this question of art and society the importance of an accepted iconography cannot be over-stated. Without it the network of beliefs and customs which hold a society together may never take shape as art. If an iconography contains a number of sufficiently powerful symbols, it can positively alter a philosophic system. The points of dogma for which no satisfactory image can be created tend to be dropped from popular religious exposition and episodes which have scarcely occupied the attention of theologians tend to grow in importance if they produce a compelling image. I would go so far as to say that the failure to discover a satisfactory symbol for the Holy Ghost has seriously impaired our concept of the Trinity.

Let me give an example of iconographic triumph and disaster from one painter in one place : Titian in Venice. In the Frari is his sublime image of the Assumption of the Virgin, which was to remain a dominant form of Baroque and Rococo painting for the next three hundred years, and was to float in the background of catholic imagination till our own day. In the *Salute* is Titian's painting of Pentecost, a work over which he took great pains, but without success. It was the final blow to a subject which had never found an impressive iconographical form, and so in spite of its theological importance, gradually faded from the consciousness of popular Catholicism. Let me take another example from Buddhism. It had been categorically laid down that the Buddha must not be portrayed, and in the earliest scenes of his life, such as those on the Stupa at Sanchi, the central point of each episode is left a blank—an empty chair or a deserted boat. This insult to the image-making faculty was not to be borne, and a representation of the Buddha was finally accepted. But where did it come from ? From the imitation, in the fringes of the Buddhist world, of some Praxitelian Apollo. Thus the most extreme example of spirituality was embodied by the most concrete expression of physical beauty. Conversely, dogma may triumph over the popular love of imagery in a theocratic society, and produce an iconography, like that of later Buddhism, with its 10,000 Buddhas, which deprives images of all artistic quality.

Lest it should be thought that this question of iconography does not apply to modern life, let me add that it is not confined to dogmatic religion. For example, the iconography of the Romantic Movement from 1790 to 1830 was almost as compulsive as if it had been laid down by the Council of Trent. The tiger—in Blake, Stubbs, Géricault, Delacroix, Barye, and a dozen lesser artists ; the cloud—in Wordsworth and Byron, Shelley, Turner and Constable ; the shipwreck—in Byron, Turner, Goya, Géricault, Delacroix and Victor Hugo : these are symbols of romanticism, used and accepted unconsciously because they expressed the new worship of nature and power, and a new sense of destiny. I think it would be a mistake to call this state of mind a religion. That word should be reserved for beliefs which are based on a book of holy writ and involve certain formal observances. But at least we can say that the belief in nature,

which expressed itself in the landscape painting of the nineteenth century and has remained the most productive source of popular art to this day, is a non-material belief. It is something which cannot be justified by reason alone and seems to lift the life of the senses on to a higher plane.

This suggests another 'law' in the relationship of art and society: that it is valuable only when the spiritual life is strong enough to insist on some sort of expression through symbols. No great social arts can be based on material values or physical sensations alone.

This 'law' leads me to consider the problem of luxury art. Now, it would be dishonest for me to take a puritanical or Veblenist view of luxury art. Like everyone who enjoys life I derive much pleasure from luxury art. Moreover there is a point—Watteau's *Enseigne de Gersaint* is an example—at which the sensuous quality of luxury art is so fine that it offers a spiritual experience. We are playing with words and concepts which, as we breathe on them, become alive and flutter from our hands. Still, the fact remains, that, in the long run, luxury art implies the reverse of what I have called a healthy relationship between art and society and so has a deadening effect. The most obvious example is the art of eighteenth-century France, where, however, the arrogant elaboration demanded by powerful patrons is sometimes sweetened, and given lasting value, by a reasonable belief in the *douceur de vivre*. But the predominance of luxury art in the eighteenth century is a short and harmless episode compared to that long slumber of the creative imagination which lasted from the end of the second century B.C. to the third century A.D. For almost five hundred years not a single new form of any value was invented, except, perhaps, in architecture. Works from the preceding centuries were reproduced interminably—made smoother and sweeter for private collectors, bigger and coarser for public commissions.

What can we say of the relations of this art to the society which produced and accepted it? That no one believed in its symbols; that no one looked to it for confirmation or enlightenment. In short that no one wanted it, except as a conventional form of display. They did not want art, they did not make it: but they collected it.

The problem of luxury art is complicated by the fact that the periods in which it predominates are usually periods when the art of the past

is collected and esteemed. This was obviously the case in Hellenised Rome and in eighteenth-century England; conversely the idea of collecting and displaying works of an earlier period was hardly known in those cultures where the need for art was strong and widely diffused. One must distinguish, of course, between the fruitful use by artists of earlier works, which took place in thirteenth-century Rheims no less than in fifteenth-century Florence, and the competitive accumulation of collectors. The feeling for the art of the past in Donatello or Ghiberti is entirely different from that of the eighteenth-century connoisseurs: at once more passionate and more practical. 'How can I use these admirable inventions to give my own message?' 'How can I surpass them in truth or expressive power?' These are the questions aroused by the work of the past in the great ages of art. In periods of luxury art, on the other hand, works of the past are collected at worst for reasons of prestige and at best in order to establish a standard of taste. The concept of good taste is the virtuous profession of luxury art. But one cannot imagine it existing in the twelfth century, or even in the Renaissance; and without going into the complex question of what the words can mean, I am inclined to doubt if a completely healthy relationship between art and society is possible while the concept of good taste exists.

Such, then, are the deductions that I would make from studying the history of art; and I have ventured, in the nineteenth-century manner, to call them laws. It is arguable that this word should never be applied to the historical process: we see too little. But at least we can say that these are strong probabilities which should be our first criteria when we come to examine the relations of art to society at the present day. In doing so I may be allowed one assumption: that fundamentally human beings have not changed. The picture of human nature which we derive from the book of Kings or the fourth Dynasty Egyptian portrait heads in Cairo and Boston, is much the same as what we know today and I think we may safely assume that it will take more than television and the internal combustion engine to change us. In fact I would suppose that we have more in common with the Middle Ages than our fathers had, because to us universal destruction is an actual possibility whereas to them it was only a pious fiction. However, if human nature has not changed,

human society has ; and changed as the result of a basic shift of mental outlook.

This change can be described in one word : materialism. The word has taken on a pejorative sense, but materialism has been the source of achievements which have added immeasurably to the well-being and happiness of mankind. Whether as the dialectical materialism of the East or the liberal materialism of the West, it has given to masses of men a new standard of living, a new sense of status and a new hope. These benefits have been achieved because materialism has been the philosophical basis of two outstanding human activities, one in the moral and one in the intellectual sphere : humanitarianism and science. These are the integrating forces of our culture, and they are as powerful, and as all pervasive, as was Christianity in the Middle Ages.

Now how does this underlying philosophy of materialism relate to art ? One cannot help being aware of one very serious obstacle. Materialism and all its children are dedicated to measurement. Bentham's philosophy was based on the greatest good for the greatest *number*. Democracy depends on counting the *number* of votes. All social studies are based on statistics. Science, although it claims to have outgrown that phase, reached its present position by an unprecedented accuracy of measurement.

In its century of triumph, measurement has even become an article of faith. The potential of faith in the human mind is probably fairly constant, but it attaches itself to different ideas or manifestations at different periods. The bones of the Saints, the Rights of Man, psycho-analysis—all these have been the means of precipitating a quantity of faith which is always in solution. People probably believe as much nonsense today as they did in the Middle Ages ; but we demand of our precipitant that it looks as if it could be proved—that it appears to be measurable. People might have believed in art during the last fifty years if its effects could have been stated in an immense table of figures or a very complicated graph : of course they would not have checked the figures or understood the graph, but the existence of these symbols of measurement would have sustained their faith.

Now, we cannot measure the amount of satisfaction which we

derive from a song ; we cannot even measure the relative greatness of artists, and attempts to do so by giving marks, popular in the eighteenth century, produced ridiculous results. Giulio Romano always came out top of the poll, which as we all know, by some un-analysable form of knowledge, is incorrect. The more honest philosophers of materialism have recognised that art cannot be measured in material terms. Bentham invented the unforgettable comparison between push-pin and poetry, coming down on the side of push-pin because more people wanted it. Poetry he defined as 'misrepresentation,' which is the liberal counterpart to Veblen's 'conspicuous waste.' The philosophers of dialectical materialism have accepted art only in so far as its magical properties can be used for political ends. Less ruthless social philosophers have conceded the right to enjoy and even to produce art among the rights of minorities. Art is the opiate of the few.

How are the philosophic assumptions of materialism reflected in the actual status of art in modern society ? It is incontrovertible that fine art, as the word is usually understood, is the preserve of a very small minority. We must not be bamboozled by the claim that more people listen to 'good' music or visit picture galleries ; nor even by the fact that a few of us have tricked the unsuspecting viewer into looking at old pictures on television. Similar claims could be made for the nineteenth century : for example, during the Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition of 1857, special trains ran from all over England, and whole factories closed down in order that the workers could enjoy the experience of art ; and yet the next fifty years saw the consolidation of a philistinism unequalled since the Roman Republic.

Anyone who has been concerned with those 'arts' which really depend on the support of a majority—the cinema, television or wholesale furnishing—knows that the minority which is interested in art is so small as to be irrelevant in any serious calculation. In England the majority is not merely apathetic, but hostile to art. A recent example was the film of *The Horse's Mouth* which the exhibitors would not show (in spite of brilliant acting and hilarious comedy) simply because the leading character was an artist. If only, they said, he had been a schoolmaster or a doctor ! This is perfectly

understandable. The existence of these freakish members of society whose usefulness cannot be demonstrated, but who often seem to be enjoying themselves and sometimes even to be making money, is an affront to the ordinary hardworking man. It is fair to say that in spite of this feeling artists are treated tolerantly in England.

We should be grateful for this tolerance, but does it not fall far short of my second condition for a healthy relationship between art and society : that the majority feel art to be absolutely necessary to them ; that they are not merely consumers, but participants and that they receive works of art as the expression of their own deepest feelings ?

Now, before admitting this, I must look back at my original definition of the word 'art.' Do the majority still feel that material things must be made more precious ? Do they still feel that certain images are so important that they must be preserved ? In a sense the answer is 'yes.' The majority still want ornament on their clothes, their furnishing fabrics, their wall papers and many objects of daily use. More than this, they still mind very much how things look, independent of their utility. Whether it be dress or motor-car design, they are still in the grip of style. They and the designers are swept along by a blind destiny, a mysterious force which they cannot analyse, but of which they are acutely conscious when they look back at the fashions of twenty years ago.

Does this mean that in ornament the relation between art and society is a healthy one ? This has certainly not been the opinion of qualified judges during the past fifty years. Ruskin and William Morris supposed that condition of ornament had been radically affected by the machine. But this turns out to be applicable only to the Gothic style. In almost every other style the machine is an extended tool that can be used with confidence ; and for that matter a great deal of the ornament of the past, from the Viking goldsmith work of Sutton Hoo to the inlaid panels of the Taj Mahal, is entirely devoid of manual sensibility and might just as well have been made by a machine. From a technical point of view, the premises on which ornamental art is produced have not greatly changed. When we examine it in the light of my other laws, however, the change is considerable. With a single exception, the ornament favoured by the

majority is no longer made for an élite ; and it no longer has any underlying sense of symbolic meaning. In one branch of art—in architecture—it has almost ceased to exist ; and although we have now grown used to buildings without ornament, the historian must record that this is a unique event in the history of art, and one which would certainly have shocked those famous architects of the past who gave so much thought to the character of their ornament, and counted upon it at all points of focus and transition. The great refusal of modern architecture was perhaps a necessary purge and had certain health-giving consequences. But how often it is simply an impoverishment, an excuse for meanness and a triumph for the spirit that denies ? That it is not the expression of a popular will we learn when we look down the blank face of a modern building into the shop windows at its base : and this leads me to the exception I mentioned just now : it is women's dress. There, it seems to me, the compulsion is so strong that a healthy relationship between art and society is never lost. I am not suggesting that all fashions are equally good—of course there are moments of failing invention and false direction. But they always right themselves because there is an indestructible *volonté générale*—an interaction between the élite and the masses, a sense of status and an unconscious feeling for symbolism.

If the position of ornament in modern society is uneasy and incomplete, the position of image art has suffered a far more drastic change, owing to the invention of the camera. The public hunger for memorable and credible images has in no way declined, but it is satisfied every day by illustrated papers ; and the love of landscape which, as I said, was one of the chief spiritual conquests of the nineteenth century, is fed by coloured postcards. I am not denying that there is an element of art in press photography ; I will also admit that I derive a pleasure from coloured postcards which must, I suppose, be called aesthetic. I prefer a good coloured postcard to a bad landscape painting. But in both these projections of the image, much of what we believe gives art its value is necessarily omitted. There is selection, but no order, and no extension of the imaginative faculty.

To realise how destructive has been the effect of the camera on image art, consider the art of portraiture. The desire to hand down

one's likeness to posterity produced one of the chief social arts of the post-medieval world. It did so because the portrait painters of the time had behind them an immense weight of *volonté générale*. The sitters participated because they knew that their desire to perpetuate their likenesses could not be achieved in any other way. Now, no one supposes that a photograph, however skilful, is comparable with a Goya as a work of art, or even as a likeness. But the fact that photography exists, and can tell us far more accurately than a mediocre painting what people looked like, has knocked away the foundation upon which portraiture rested. There is no longer a feeling of participation in the sitters. The portrait painter no longer feels that he is really needed, any more than ornament is needed on a building: and so he, too, has become an anachronism.

The portrait is typical of the decline of confidence in art which is felt unconsciously by the mass of people as a result of the camera. There is however one form of popular imagery which is not entirely dependent on photography, and that is the poster. Here, a number of my conditions for a healthy relationship between art and society obtain. Posters are made on behalf of a minority and aim at supporting some belief; they appeal to a majority, and millions of people derive from them what they take to be information about matters which they believe to be important. Moreover, posters achieve their effects through the use of symbols, and it is a curious fact that the ordinary man will accept in posters a symbolic treatment, a freedom from realism, which he would not accept in a picture framed in a gallery, simply because a poster does not exist for its own sake, but is concerned with something he needs. All this is true, and yet we know that in spite of many effective and memorable posters, advertising has not produced an art comparable to the windows of Chartres Cathedral; and never can. The reason is, of course, that it lacks what I have called the sacramental element in art. I said earlier that the nearest equivalent in modern life to the building of a medieval cathedral was the construction of a giant liner. But the liner is built for the convenience of passengers and the benefit of shareholders. The cathedral was built to the glory of God. One might add that advertising art is concerned with lies, of a relatively harmless and acceptable kind; but one must remember that the great art of the

past was also concerned with lies, often of a much more dangerous kind. The difference is not one of truth, but of the different realms to which these two forms of art belong—the realm of matter and the realm of spirit.

I need not press any further the point that the philosophy of materialism is hostile to art. But what about its two noble kinsmen, humanitarianism and science? Although they are to a great extent committed to measurement, they are not wholly materialistic. They recognise values which we may call moral, intellectual and even aesthetic. They are integrating beliefs of the last 150 years. How are they connected with art?

The more enlightened supporters of humanitarianism have often bewailed the fact that art seems to have flourished in societies which were quite the reverse of humane. Yet we feel instinctively that this is natural; that kindness, mildness, decency, are not as likely to produce art as violence, passion and ruthlessness. One of the most ancient and persistent images in art is the lion devouring a horse or deer; and it must puzzle the humanitarian mind that this blood-thirsty episode came to be accepted as a suitable decoration for pagan sarcophagi, then entered Christian iconography as a symbol of the spiritual life; and finally became the dominating motif of the only great religious painter of the nineteenth century, Delacroix. The answer is given in Blake's *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, and I will not be so foolish as to elaborate it. But I may quote the words of a great living painter: 'It isn't enough to have the eyes of a gazelle; you also need the claws of a cat in order to capture your bird alive and play with it before you eat it and so join its life to yours.' To put it less picturesquely, art depends on a condition of spiritual energy, which must devour and transform all that is passive and phlegmatic in life, and no amount of goodwill can take the place of this creative hunger.

I am not saying that violence and brutality beget art, or that there is not still far too much violence and brutality left in the world. The bright new towns in our welfare state are an achievement of which humanity may be proud. But do not let us suppose that this peaceful, humdrum, hell-free, de-Christianised, life has been achieved without loss. And apart from the unlikelihood of art being forged at such a

low temperature, the doctrine of equality and the drift towards equality, on which such a society depends, runs counter to one of my first laws. We have many reliable indications of what Mr. and Mrs. Honest Everyman really want. We don't need surveys and questionnaires—only a glance at suburban or provincial furniture stores and television advertisements. There we see the art of a prosperous democracy—the art that is easily unwrapped—the art of least resistance. This would not matter much, were it not that Gresham's law—that bad money drives out good—is equally true of spiritual currency; and we are all surrounded by far more bad art than we are aware of. I observed during the war, when the amount of conspicuous waste was cut down in the interest of economy, and objects of daily use, like teacups, were made without even a curve, let alone a pattern, that the appetite for real works of art was much keener and more discriminating than it was before.

With science the position is rather different. It is not so much a soil in which art will not grow as it is a rival crop. The development of physical science in the last hundred years has been one of the most colossal efforts the human intellect has ever made. Now, I think it is arguable that human beings can produce, in a given epoch, only a certain amount of creative power, and that this is directed to different ends at different times; and I believe that the dazzling achievements of science during the last seventy years have deflected many of those skills and endowments which go to the making of a work of art. To begin with there is the sheer energy. In every moulding of a Florentine palace we are conscious of an immense intellectual energy, and it is the absence of this energy in the nineteenth-century copies of renaissance buildings which makes them seem so dead. To find a form with the same vitality as the window mouldings of the Palazzo Strozzi I must wait till I get back into an aeroplane, and look at the relation of the engine to the wing. That form is alive, not (as used to be said) because it is functional—many functional shapes are entirely uninteresting—but because it is animated by the breath of modern science.

The deflections from art to science are the more serious because these are not, as used to be supposed, two contrary activities, but in fact draw on many of the same capacities of the human mind. In

the last resort each depends on the imagination. Artist and scientist alike are both trying to give concrete form to dimly apprehended ideas. Both, in the words of Aristotle's famous definition of poetry, are hoping 'to see similars in dissimilars.' 'All science,' says Dr. Bronowski, 'is the search for unity in hidden likenesses, and the starting point is an image, because then the unity is before our mind's eye.' He gives the example of how Copernicus's notion of the solar system was inspired by the old astrological image of man with the signs of the Zodiac distributed about his body, and notices how Copernicus uses warm-blooded expressions to describe the chilly operations of outer space. 'The earth conceives from the sun' or 'The sun rules a family of stars.' Our scientists are no longer as anthropomorphic as that; but they still depend on humanly comprehensible images, and the valid symbols of our time, invented to embody some scientific truth, have taken root in the popular imagination. Do those red and blue balls connected by rods really resemble a type of atomic structure? I am too ignorant to say, but I accept the symbol just as an early Christian accepted the Fish or the Lamb, and I find it echoed or even (it would seem) anticipated in the work of modern artists like Kandinsky and Miro.

Finally there is the question of popular interest and approval. The position of science in the modern world illustrates clearly what I meant by a vital relationship with society. Science is front page news; every child has a scientific toy; small boys dream of space ships, big boys know how to make or mend a radio set. What does a compulsory visit to an art museum mean compared to this? An opportunity to fool about and hide behind the showcases? And, at the other end of the scale, the research scientist has universities competing for his favours with millions of pounds worth of plant and equipment, while principalities and powers wait breathless for his conclusions. So he goes to work, as Titian once did, confident that he will succeed, because he knows that everybody needs him.

Such are the conclusions which force themselves upon me when I examine, in the light of history, the present relations of art and society. Those who care for art and feel a sense of loyalty to their own times may feel it their duty to refute these conclusions, but I think they will find it difficult to do so without straining the evidence. Does

Art and Society

this mean that a broadly based social art is unlikely to appear for a long time? I am inclined to think so. This is not as catastrophic as it sounds. At least ninety-per-cent of our fellow country men get on very well without art, and I don't quite know why we should bother about them or try to persuade them to take an interest. No one tries to persuade me to take an interest in racing. And yet some instinct which I can neither define nor defend makes me believe that people without art are incomplete and that posterity will have a poor opinion of them; and so I peer anxiously into the dark scene I have just described. This is what I find.

The fact that art is not only tolerated, but actually supported by government and municipal funds, although it is hardly worth a single vote and practically no politician has the faintest belief or interest in it, shows that it has retained some of its magic power. The unbelieving majority still recognise that the believing minority, in picture galleries and concert halls, achieves a state of mind of peculiar value. There are very few people who have never had an aesthetic experience, either from the sound of a band or the sight of a sunset or the action of a horse. The words 'beauty' and 'beautiful' often pass the lips of those who have never looked at a work of art—oftener, perhaps, than they pass the lips of museum curators—and some meaning must be attached to them.

I believe that the majority of people really long to experience that moment of pure, disinterested, non-material satisfaction which causes them to ejaculate the word 'beautiful'; and since, this experience can be obtained more reliably through works of art than through any other means, I believe that those of us who try to make works of art more accessible are not wasting our time. But how little we know of what we are doing. I am not even sure that museum art and its modern derivatives, however extended and skilfully contrived, will ever bring about a healthy relationship between art and society. It is too deeply rooted in cultural values which only a small minority can acquire. Here we reach the crux of the problem: the nature of the élite. It was my first conclusion that art cannot exist without one, my second that the élite must inspire confidence in the majority. During the last hundred years values in art have been established by a minority so small and so cut off from the sources of life, that it cannot

Kenneth Clark

be called an élite in my sense of the word. Let us call it a priesthood, and add that in preserving its mysteries from the profanation of all-conquering materialism, it has made them rather too mysterious. There is something admirable in all forms of bigotry, but I do not believe that we can return to a healthy relationship between art and society over so narrow a bridge. On the contrary, I believe that our hope lies in an expanding élite, an élite drawn from every class, and with varying degrees of education, but united in a belief that non-material values can be discovered in visible things. Is it fatuous to interpret the large sale of books on art and the relative success of certain television programmes as a sign that such an élite is forming? But even if these are genuine snowdrops, and not paper flowers stuck in the woods by hopeful highbrows, many obstacles will remain. There is the lack of an iconography. There is the glut of false art which blunts our appetites. There is even the danger that true art may be degraded through the media of mass communications. But I believe that all these obstacles can be overcome if only the *need* for art, which lies dormant and unperceived in the spirit of every man, yet is manifested by him unconsciously every day, can be united with the *will* to art which must remain the endowment, and the responsibility, of the happy few.

A Hundred Years of Portraits

Selected by

OSBERT LANCASTER

THE span of time covered by the accompanying portraits is, appropriately enough, exactly that of *The Cornhill*. The Winterhalter of Constantia, 4th Duchess of Basingstoke, was painted the very year which saw the publication of the first issue, and Her Grace, it is pleasant to recall, was among the first subscribers: the contemporary portrait of Lady Jennifer Currants, the Countess of Littlehampton's only daughter and great-grandchild of the Duchess, was completed only last month.

The majority of the portraits reproduced are, however, of the Countess herself of whom it can safely be said that few women of her generation have displayed so sustained, albeit personal, an enthusiasm for art, inherited, perhaps, from her mother, Lady Gertrude Mountpleasant, in her youth the friend and inspiration of so many of the later Pre-Raphaelites.

There are, unfortunately, one or two unavoidable gaps. The Editor, after prolonged consideration, regretfully decided that *The Cornhill* was not in the circumstance the most suitable place to publish her Ladyship's portrait by Salvador Dali, never yet reproduced, and Lord Littlehampton was, perhaps understandably, reluctant to allow the Stanley Spencer of his wife as Lady Godiva riding over Cookham Bridge to reach a wider public.

Nevertheless, the series as a whole provides a unique panorama of a hundred years of portraiture, and it is with the greatest sincerity that we take this opportunity of expressing our gratitude to the Countess of Littlehampton for so kindly making it available.

O. L.

(All the pictures here reproduced are on view at Castle Littlehampton, open to the public every day during the summer, except Wednesdays, entrance 2/6, guide book with many illustrations 5/-. Easily reached from London by Green Line and Southern Electric.)



A HUNDRED YEARS OF PORTRAITS

selected by

OSBERT LANCASTER

from

THE LITTLEHAMPTON COLLECTION

by kind permission of the
Earl and Countess of Littlehampton









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EMMA: A FRAGMENT by Charlotte Brontë

INTRODUCED BY MARGARET LANE

IF death had not silenced Charlotte Brontë when it did, in the thirty-ninth year of her age and at the height of her powers, would she have left us another novel to stand in the canon with *Villette* and *Jane Eyre*? Or would she in any case have remained silent? Speculation is not as idle as it seems, for on the one hand there are those who believe that the Rev. Arthur Nicholls and comparative happiness would have dried up the source of Charlotte Brontë's protest (protest and poetry being the springs of her art), killing her fertility as a writer: and on the other hand we have, we actually have, a fragment.

It is the first two chapters of *Emma*, a novel. (She had at first thought of calling it *Willie Ellin*, and no doubt would have changed the title yet again on account of that other *Emma* whose perfections she found it difficult to assess.) It was published five years after her death in *The Cornhill*, with an unctuous introduction by Thackeray which yet contains some splendidly illuminated phrases, and then, as far as the general reader was concerned, was soon forgotten. It has not until now, so far as I know, been reprinted. It opens the door a fraction of an inch into a non-existent future; it gives a disturbing glimpse.

'One evening, at the close of 1854,' wrote Thackeray, 'as Charlotte Nicholls sat with her husband by the fire'—they had been married that summer—'she suddenly said to her husband, "If you had not been with me, I must have been writing now." She then ran upstairs, and brought down, and read aloud, the beginning of a new tale. When she had finished, her husband remarked, "The critics will accuse you of repetition."' Mr. Nicholls was right: certain things in this new beginning are so repetitious as to be startling—they disturb one, like sudden evidences of obsession, and even Charlotte's confident reply

"O ! I shall alter that. I always begin two or three times before I can please myself"—hardly drives off the suspicion that she is still not free from the childhood miseries, the dungeon taste she had known at Cowan Bridge.

It is absurd to judge an unfinished work from two short chapters, but there are already in those chapters some of the compulsive strains of Charlotte Brontë's music, as recognisable and as significant as the dark themes running in *basso continuo* through the work of Dickens. Her imagination was more deeply and tenaciously subjective than most ; it is her own wounds that cry with the mouth of poetry, the blood of her prose is rich with indignation.

So we see, as we might have guessed, that we are to be shown, as it were through a keyhole, some painful early scenes in the life of an outcast. It is a hackneyed theme, or at least it seems so now, when two generations of children have been brought up on Frances Hodgson Burnett's sentimental and charming working of it in *A Little Princess*—the theme of the petted rich girl in a snobbish school, who suddenly, through the death or ruin of her parents or some other misadventure, is reduced to nothing, and becomes the helpless victim of scorn and hatred. Whether Charlotte Brontë had ever read such a tale, one cannot tell : she could have done, for in 1818 an anonymous novel, *Fatherless Fanny*, had appeared with an identical beginning, and had enjoyed some success. But in the Brontë fragment there are already undertones, echoes from greater depths than can be sounded in the Regency novel of reputations, orphans and rakes.

It is almost touching to recognise the dominant Brontë characters in these first two chapters of *Emma* : Matilda Fitzgibbon, silent and unattractive little heroine, whom no-one at school can like, hiding a sick heart and a dark history under a frigid demeanour and (we are sure of it) an assumed name : Miss Wilcox, coarse-grained insensitive teacher : Miss Scatcherd in new guise, briskly inflicting her pains : Mr. William Ellin, mysterious middle-aged bachelor, less calm than at first appears—can it be that he is *Emma's* hero ? And who is Emma ? We shall never know. Charlotte Brontë did not tell her husband how the story was to develop, and so he could not tell Thackeray, and Thackeray cannot tell us.

It is all guesswork. The opening chapters might have been changed

if she had lived, but I do not believe the novel would have been abandoned. Mr. Nicholls was a possessive husband, a little jealous of his wife's literary fame and determined that she should concentrate on him; but time would have slackened his intensity; children are not always babies, and even parsonages in that halcyon age were cleaned and cared for by rough, devoted, articulate Yorkshire servants. I do not believe that married life and happiness could stop up the welling spring, the almost alarming force of Charlotte Brontë's creative imagination. They would change it, of course; she would have mellowed and matured, have explored further into the mazy thicket of passionate feeling between men and women. One pictures her writing away in the dining-room of her Parsonage, like Mrs. Gaskell in hers, while Mr. Nicholls comes and goes from the parlour which for a lifetime (but now no longer) was Mr. Brontë's.

But here, of course, we remember, and turn back to the two chapters with a sigh. 'The trembling little hand,' wrote Thackeray, 'was to write no more. The heart, newly awakened to love and happiness, and throbbing with maternal hope, was soon to cease to beat . . .' We recoil from something in his voice, but that is not his fault; the sexual attitude of his time was mawkish, imposing a false tone, whenever the word 'woman' had to be uttered, on even the greatest men. But there is strong feeling there, and we partly share it. 'Will not the leaf be turned some day, and the story be told? Shall the deviser of the tale somewhere perfect the history of little Emma's griefs and troubles?' Alas, no. It is a great pity. But even a fragment is precious; and here we have it.

At the end of his introduction in the Cornhill Magazine for April, 1860, Thackeray writes:

How well I remember the delight, and wonder, and pleasure with which I read Jane Eyre, sent to me by an author whose name and sex were then alike unknown to me; the strange fascinations of the book; and how with my own work pressing upon me, I could not, having taken the volumes up, lay them down until they were read through! Hundreds of those who, like myself, recognized and admired that master-work of a great genius, will look

Emma : A Fragment

with a mournful interest and regard and curiosity upon this, the last fragmentary sketch from the noble hand which wrote Jane Eyre.

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Emma

(A FRAGMENT OF A STORY BY THE LATE CHARLOTTE BRONTË.)

CHAPTER I.

WE all seek an ideal in life. A pleasant fancy began to visit me in a certain year, that perhaps the number of human beings is few who do not find their quest at some era of life for some space more or less brief. I had certainly not found mine in youth, though the strong belief I held of its existence sufficed through all my brightest and freshest time to keep me hopeful. I had not found it in maturity. I was become resigned never to find it. I had lived certain dim years entirely tranquil and unexpectant. And now I was not sure but something was hovering round my hearth which pleased me wonderfully.

Look at it, reader. Come into my parlour and judge for yourself whether I do right to care for this thing. First, you may scan me, if you please. We shall go on better together after a satisfactory introduction and due apprehension of identity. My name is Mrs. Chalfont. I am a widow. My house is good, and my income such as need not check the impulse either of charity or a moderate hospitality. I am not young, nor yet old. There is no silver yet in my hair, but its yellow lustre is gone. In my face wrinkles are yet to come, but I have almost forgotten the days when it wore any bloom. I married when I was very young. I lived for fifteen years a life which, whatever its trials, could not be called stagnant. Then for five years I was alone, and, having no children, desolate. Lately Fortune, by a somewhat curious turn of her wheel, placed in my way an interest and a companion.

The neighbourhood where I live is pleasant enough, its scenery agreeable, and its society civilized, though not numerous. About a

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mile from my house there is a ladies' school, established but lately—not more than three years since. The conductresses of this school were of my acquaintances; and though I cannot say that they occupied the very highest place in my opinion—for they had brought back from some months' residence abroad, for finishing purposes, a good deal that was fantastic, affected, and pretentious—yet I awarded them some portion of that respect which seems the fair due of all women who face life bravely, and try to make their own way by their own efforts.

About a year after the Misses Wilcox opened their school, when the number of their pupils was as yet exceedingly limited, and when, no doubt, they were looking out anxiously enough for augmentation, the entrance-gate to their little drive was one day thrown back to admit a carriage—"a very handsome, fashionable carriage," Miss Mabel Wilcox said, in narrating the circumstance afterwards—and drawn by a pair of really splendid horses. The sweep up the drive, the loud ring at the door-bell, the bustling entrance into the house, the ceremonious admission to the bright drawing-room, roused excitement enough in Fuchsia Lodge. Miss Wilcox repaired to the reception-room in a pair of new gloves, and carrying in her hand a handkerchief of French cambric.

She found a gentleman seated on the sofa, who, as he rose up, appeared a tall fine-looking personage; at least she thought him so, as he stood with his back to the light. He introduced himself as Mr. Fitzgibbon, inquired if Miss Wilcox had a vacancy, and intimated that he wished to intrust to her care a new pupil in the shape of his daughter. This was welcome news, for there was many a vacancy in Miss Wilcox's schoolroom; indeed, her establishment was as yet limited to the select number of three, and she and her sisters were looking forward with anything but confidence to the balancing of accounts at the close of their first half-year. Few objects could have been more agreeable to her then, than that to which, by a wave of the hand, Mr. Fitzgibbon now directed her attention—the figure of a child standing near the drawing-room window.

Had Miss Wilcox's establishment boasted fuller ranks—had she indeed entered well on that course of prosperity which in after years an undeviating attention to externals enabled her so triumphantly to

realize—an early thought with her would have been to judge whether the acquisition now offered was likely to answer well as a show-pupil. She would have instantly marked her look, dress, &c., and inferred her value from these indicia. In those anxious commencing times, however, Miss Wilcox could scarce afford herself the luxury of such appreciation : a new pupil represented 40*l.* a year, independently of masters' terms—and 40*l.* a year was a sum Miss Wilcox needed and was glad to secure ; besides, the fine carriage, the fine gentleman, and the fine name gave gratifying assurance, enough and to spare, of eligibility in the proffered connection. It was admitted, then, that there were vacancies in Fuchsia Lodge ; that Miss Fitzgibbon could be received at once ; that she was to learn all that the school prospectus proposed to teach ; to be liable to every extra ; in short, to be as expensive, and consequently as profitable a pupil, as any directress's heart could wish. All this was arranged as upon velvet, smoothly and liberally. Mr. Fitzgibbon showed in the transaction none of the hardness of the bargain-making man of business, and as little of the penurious anxiety of the straitened professional man. Miss Wilcox felt him to be "quite the gentleman." Everything disposed her to be partially inclined towards the little girl whom he, on taking leave, formally committed to her guardianship ; and as if no circumstance should be wanting to complete her happy impression, the address left written on a card served to fill up the measure of Miss Wilcox's satisfaction—Conway Fitzgibbon, Esq., May Park, Midland County. That very day three decrees were passed in the new-comer's favour :—

1st. That she was to be Miss Wilcox's bed-fellow.

2nd. To sit next her at table.

3rd. To walk out with her.

In a few days it became evident that a fourth secret clause had been added to these, viz. that Miss Fitzgibbon was to be favoured, petted, and screened on all possible occasions.

An ill-conditioned pupil, who before coming to Fuchsia Lodge had passed a year under the care of certain old-fashioned Misses Sterling, of Hartwood, and from them had picked up unpractical notions of justice, took it upon her to utter an opinion on this system of favouritism.

"The Misses Sterling," she injudiciously said, "never distinguished

any girl because she was richer or better dressed than the rest. They would have scorned to do so. They always rewarded girls according as they behaved well to their school-fellows and minded their lessons, not according to the number of their silk dresses, and fine laces and feathers."

For it must not be forgotten that Miss Fitzgibbon's trunks, when opened, disclosed a splendid wardrobe; so fine were the various articles of apparel, indeed, that instead of assigning for their accommodation the painted deal drawers of the school bedroom, Miss Wilcox had them arranged in a mahogany bureau in her own room. With her own hands, too, she would on Sundays array the little favourite in her quilted silk pelisse, her hat and feathers, her ermine boa, and little French boots and gloves. And very self-complacent she felt when she led the young heiress (a letter from Mr. Fitzgibbon, received since his first visit, had communicated the additional particulars that his daughter was his only child, and would be the inheritress of his estates, including May Park, Midland County)—when she led her, I say, into the church, and seated her stately by her side at the top of the gallery-pew. Unbiassed observers might, indeed, have wondered what there was to be proud of, and puzzled their heads to detect the special merits of this little woman in silk—for, to speak truth, Miss Fitzgibbon was far from being the beauty of the school: there were two or three blooming little faces amongst her companions lovelier than hers. Had she been a poor child, Miss Wilcox herself would not have liked her physiognomy at all: rather, indeed, would it have repelled than attracted her; and, moreover—though Miss Wilcox hardly confessed the circumstance to herself, but, on the contrary, strove hard not to be conscious of it—there were moments when she became sensible of a certain strange weariness in continuing her system of partiality. It hardly came natural to her to show this special distinction in this particular instance. An undefined wonder would smite her sometimes that she did not take more real satisfaction in flattering and caressing this embryo heiress—that she did not like better to have her always at her side, under her special charge. On principle Miss Wilcox continued the plan she had begun. On principle, for she argued with herself: This is the most aristocratic and richest of my pupils; she brings me the most credit and the most profit: therefore,

Emma : A Fragment

I ought in justice to show her a special indulgence ; which she did—but with a gradually increasing peculiarity of feeling.

Certainly, the undue favours showered on little Miss Fitzgibbon brought their object no real benefit. Unfitted for the character of playfellow by her position of favourite, her fellow-pupils rejected her company as decidedly as they dared. Active rejection was not long necessary ; it was soon seen that passive avoidance would suffice ; the pet was not social. No : even Miss Wilcox never thought her social. When she sent for her to show her fine clothes in the drawing-room where there was company, and especially when she had her into her parlour of an evening to be her own companion, Miss Wilcox used to feel curiously perplexed. She would try to talk affably to the young heiress, to draw her out, to amuse her. To herself the governess could render no reason why her efforts soon flagged ; but this was invariably the case. However, Miss Wilcox was a woman of courage ; and be the *protégée* what she might, the patroness did not fail to continue on *principle* her system of preference.

A favourite has no friends ; and the observation of a gentleman, who about this time called at the Lodge and chanced to see Miss Fitzgibbon, was, " That child looks consummately unhappy : " he was watching Miss Fitzgibbon, as she walked, by herself, fine and solitary, while her school-fellows were merrily playing.

" Who is the miserable little wight ? " he asked.

He was told her name and dignity.

" Wretched little soul ! " he repeated ; and he watched her pace down the walk and back again ; marching upright, her hands in her ermine muff, her fine pelisse showing a gay sheen to the winter's sun, her large Leghorn hat shading such a face as fortunately had not its parallel on the premises.

" Wretched little soul ! " reiterated this gentleman. He opened the drawing-room window, watched the bearer of the muff till he caught her eye, and then summoned her with his finger. She came ; he stooped his head down to her ; she lifted her face up to him.

" Don't you play, little girl ? "

" No, sir. "

" No ! why not ? Do you think yourself better than other children ? "

No answer.

"Is it because people tell you you are rich, you won't play?"

The young lady was gone. He stretched his hand to arrest her, but she wheeled beyond his reach, and ran quickly out of sight.

"An only child," pleaded Miss Wilcox; "possibly spoiled by her papa, you know; we must excuse a little pettishness."

"Humph! I am afraid there is not a little to excuse."

CHAPTER II.

MR. ELLIN—the gentleman mentioned in the last chapter—was a man who went where he liked, and being a gossiping, leisurely person, he liked to go almost anywhere. He could not be rich, he lived so quietly; and yet he must have had some money, for, without apparent profession, he continued to keep a house and a servant. He always spoke of himself as having once been a worker; but if so, that could not have been very long since, for he still looked far from old. Sometimes of an evening, under a little social conversational excitement, he would look quite young; but he was changeable in mood, and complexion, and expression, and had chameleon eyes, sometimes blue and merry, sometimes grey and dark, and anon green and gleaming. On the whole he might be called a fair man, of average height, rather thin and rather wiry. He had not resided more than two years in the present neighbourhood; his antecedents were unknown there; but as the Rector, a man of good family and standing, and of undoubted scrupulousness in the choice of acquaintance, had introduced him, he found everywhere a prompt reception, of which nothing in his conduct had yet seemed to prove him unworthy. Some people, indeed, dubbed him "a character," and fancied him "eccentric;" but others could not see the appropriateness of the epithets. He always seemed to them very harmless and quiet, not always perhaps so perfectly unreserved and comprehensible as might be wished. He had a discomposing expression in his eye; and sometimes in conversation an ambiguous diction; but still they believed he meant no harm.

Mr. Ellin often called on the Misses Wilcox; he sometimes took

Emma : A Fragment

tea with them ; he appeared to like tea and muffins, and not to dislike the kind of conversation which usually accompanies that refreshment ; he was said to be a good shot, a good angler.—He proved himself an excellent gossip—he liked gossip well. On the whole he liked women's society, and did not seem to be particular in requiring difficult accomplishments or rare endowments in his female acquaintance. The Misses Wilcox, for instance, were not much less shallow than the china saucer which held their teacups ; yet Mr. Ellin got on perfectly well with them, and had apparently great pleasure in hearing them discuss all the details of their school. He knew the names of all their young ladies too, and would shake hands with them if he met them walking out ; he knew their examination days and gala days, and more than once accompanied Mr. Cecil, the curate, when he went to examine in ecclesiastical history.

This ceremony took place weekly, on Wednesday afternoons, after which Mr. Cecil sometimes stayed to tea, and usually found two or three lady parishioners invited to meet him. Mr. Ellin was also pretty sure to be there. Rumour gave one of the Misses Wilcox in anticipated wedlock to the curate, and furnished his friend with a second in the same tender relation ; so that it is to be conjectured they made a social, pleasant party under such interesting circumstances. Their evenings rarely passed without Miss Fitzgibbon being introduced—all worked muslin and streaming sash and elaborated ringlets ; others of the pupils would also be called in, perhaps to sing, to show off a little at the piano, or sometimes to repeat poetry. Miss Wilcox conscientiously cultivated display in her young ladies, thinking she thus fulfilled a duty to herself and to them, at once spreading her own fame and giving the children self-possessed manners.

It was curious to note how, on these occasions, good, genuine natural qualities still vindicated their superiority to counterfeit, artificial advantages. While "dear Miss Fitzgibbon," dressed up and flattered as she was, could only sidle round the circle with the crest-fallen air which seemed natural to her, just giving her hand to the guests, then almost snatching it away, and sneaking in unmannerly haste to the place allotted to her at Miss Wilcox's side, which place she filled like a piece of furniture, neither smiling nor speaking the evening through—while such was *her* deportment, certain of her

companions, as Mary Franks, Jessy Newton, &c., handsome, open-countenanced little damsels—fearless because harmless—would enter with a smile of salutation and a blush of pleasure, make their pretty reverence at the drawing-room door, stretch a friendly little hand to such visitors as they knew, and sit down to the piano to play their well-practised duet with an innocent, obliging readiness which won all hearts.

There was a girl called Diana—the girl alluded to before as having once been Miss Sterling's pupil—a daring, brave girl, much loved and a little feared by her comrades. She had good faculties, both physical and mental—was clever, honest, and dauntless. In the schoolroom she set her young brow like a rock against Miss Fitzgibbon's pretensions; she found also heart and spirit to withstand them in the drawing-room. One evening, when the curate had been summoned away by some piece of duty directly after tea, and there was no stranger present but Mr. Ellin, Diana had been called in to play a long, difficult piece of music which she could execute like a master. She was still in the midst of her performance, when—Mr. Ellin having for the first time, perhaps, recognized the existence of the heiress by asking if she was cold—Miss Wilcox took the opportunity of launching into a strain of commendation on Miss Fitzgibbon's inanimate behaviour, terming it lady-like, modest, and exemplary. Whether Miss Wilcox's constrained tone betrayed how far she was from really feeling the approbation she expressed, how entirely she spoke from a sense of duty, and not because she felt it possible to be in any degree charmed by the personage she praised—or whether Diana, who was by nature hasty, had a sudden fit of irritability—is not quite certain, but she turned on her music-stool:—

"Ma'am," said she to Miss Wilcox, "that girl does not deserve so much praise. Her behaviour is not at all exemplary. In the schoolroom she is insolently distant. For my part I denounce her airs; there is not one of us but is as good or better than she, though we may not be as rich."

And Diana shut up the piano, took her music-book under her arm, curtsied, and vanished.

Strange to relate, Miss Wilcox said not a word at the time; nor was Diana subsequently reprimanded for this outbreak. Miss Fitzgibbon

had now been three months in the school, and probably the governess had had leisure to wear out her early raptures of partiality.

Indeed, as time advanced, this evil often seemed likely to right itself ; again and again it seemed that Miss Fitzgibbon was about to fall to her proper level, but then, somewhat provokingly to the lovers of reason and justice, some little incident would occur to invest her insignificance with artificial interest. Once it was the arrival of a great basket of hothouse fruit—melons, grapes, and pines—as a present to Miss Wilcox in Miss Fitzgibbon's name. Whether it was that a share of these luscious productions was imparted too freely to the nominal donor, or whether she had had a surfeit of cake on Miss Mabel Wilcox's birthday, it so befel, that in some disturbed state of the digestive organs Miss Fitzgibbon took to sleep-walking. She one night terrified the school into a panic by passing through the bedrooms, all white in her night-dress, moaning and holding out her hands as she went.

Dr. Percy was then sent for ; his medicines, probably, did not suit the case ; for within a fortnight after the somnambulistic feat, Miss Wilcox going upstairs in the dark, trod on something which she thought was the cat, and on calling for a light, found her darling Matilda Fitzgibbon curled round on the landing, blue, cold, and stiff, without any light in her half-open eyes, or any colour in her lips, or movement in her limbs. She was not soon roused from this fit ; her senses seemed half scattered ; and Miss Wilcox had now an undeniable excuse for keeping her all day on the drawing-room sofa, and making more of her than ever.

There comes a day of reckoning both for petted heiresses and partial governesses.

One clear winter morning, as Mr. Ellin was seated at breakfast, enjoying his bachelor's easy chair and damp, fresh London newspaper, a note was brought to him marked "private," and "in haste." The last injunction was vain, for William Ellin did nothing in haste—he had no haste in him ; he wondered anybody should be so foolish as to hurry ; life was short enough without it. He looked at the little note—three-cornered, scented, and feminine. He knew the handwriting ; it came from the very lady Rumour had so often assigned him as his own. The bachelor took out a morocco case, selected from a variety of little instruments a pair of tiny scissors, cut round the seal,

and read:—"Miss Wilcox's compliments to Mr. Ellin, and she should be truly glad to see him for a few minutes, if at leisure. Miss W. requires a little advice. She will reserve explanations till she sees Mr. E."

Mr. Ellin very quietly finished his breakfast; then, as it was a very fine December day—hoar and crisp, but serene, and not bitter—he carefully prepared himself for the cold, took his cane, and set out. He liked the walk; the air was still; the sun not wholly ineffectual; the path firm, and but lightly powdered with snow. He made his journey as long as he could by going round through many fields, and through winding, unfrequented lanes. When there was a tree in the way conveniently placed for support, he would sometimes stop, lean his back against the trunk, fold his arms, and muse. If Rumour could have seen him, she would have affirmed that he was thinking about Miss Wilcox; perhaps when he arrives at the Lodge his demeanour will inform us whether such an idea be warranted.

At last he stands at the door and rings the bell; he is admitted, and shown into the parlour—a smaller and a more private room than the drawing-room. Miss Wilcox occupies it; she is seated at her writing-table; she rises—not without air and grace—to receive her visitor. This air and grace she learnt in France; for she was in a Parisian school for six months, and learnt there a little French, and a stock of gestures and courtesies. No: it is certainly not impossible that Mr. Ellin may admire Miss Wilcox. She is not without prettiness, any more than are her sisters; and she and they are one and all smart and showy. Bright stone-blue is a colour they like in dress; a crimson bow rarely fails to be pinned on somewhere to give contrast; positive colours generally—grass-greens, red violets, deep yellows—are in favour with them; all harmonies are at a discount. Many people would think Miss Wilcox, standing there in her blue merino dress and pomegranate ribbon, a very agreeable woman. She has regular features; the nose is a little sharp, the lips a little thin, good complexion, light red hair. She is very business-like, very practical; she never in her life knew a refinement of feeling or of thought; she is entirely limited, respectable, and self-satisfied. She has a cool, prominent eye; sharp and shallow pupil, unshrinking and inexpressive; pale irid; light eyelashes, light brow. Miss Wilcox is a very proper and decorous person; but she could not be delicate or

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modest, because she is naturally destitute of sensitiveness. Her voice, when she speaks, has no vibration ; her face no expression ; her manner no emotion. Blush or tremor she never knew.

"What can I do for you, Miss Wilcox ?" says Mr. Ellin, approaching the writing-table, and taking a chair beside it.

"Perhaps you can advise me," was the answer ; "or perhaps you can give me some information. I feel so thoroughly puzzled, and really fear all is not right."

"Where ? and how ?"

"I will have redress if it be possible," pursued the lady ; "but how to set about obtaining it ! Draw to the fire, Mr. Ellin ; it is a cold day."

They both drew to the fire. She continued :—

"You know the Christmas holidays are near ?"

He nodded.

"Well, about a fortnight since, I wrote, as is customary, to the friends of my pupils, notifying the day when we break up, and requesting that, if it was desired that any girl should stay the vacation, intimation should be sent accordingly. Satisfactory and prompt answers came to all the notes except one—that addressed to Conway Fitzgibbon, Esquire, May Park, Midland County—Matilda Fitzgibbon's father, you know."

"What ? won't he let her go home ?"

"Let her go home, my dear sir ! you shall hear. Two weeks elapsed, during which I daily expected an answer ; none came. I felt annoyed at the delay, as I had particularly requested a speedy reply. This very morning I had made up my mind to write again, when—what do you think the post brought me ?"

"I should like to know."

"My own letter—actually my own—returned from the post-office, with an intimation—such an intimation !—but read for yourself."

She handed to Mr. Ellin an envelope ; he took from it the returned note and a paper—the paper bore a hastily-scribbled line or two. It said, in brief terms, that there was no such place in Midland County as May Park, and that no such person had ever been heard of there as Conway Fitzgibbon, Esquire.

On reading this, Mr. Ellin slightly opened his eyes.

"I hardly thought it was so bad as this," said he.

"What? you did think it was bad then? You suspected that something was wrong?"

"Really! I scarcely knew what I thought or suspected. How very odd, no such place as May Park! The grand mansion, the grounds, the oaks, the deer, vanished clean away. And then Fitzgibbon himself! But you saw Fitzgibbon—he came in his carriage?"

"In his carriage!" echoed Miss Wilcox; "a most stylish equipage; and himself a most distinguished person. Do you think, after all, there is some mistake?"

"Certainly, a mistake; but when it is rectified I don't think Fitzgibbon or May Park will be forthcoming. Shall I run down to Midland County and look after these two precious objects?"

"Oh! would you be so good, Mr. Ellin? I knew you would be so kind; personal inquiry, you know—there's nothing like it."

"Nothing at all. Meantime, what shall you do with the child—the pseudo-heiress, if pseudo she be? Shall you correct her—let her know her place?"

"I think," responded Miss Wilcox, reflectively—"I think not exactly as yet; my plan is to do nothing in a hurry; we will inquire first. If after all she should turn out to be connected as was at first supposed, one had better not do anything which one might afterwards regret. No; I shall make no difference with her till I hear from you again."

"Very good. As you please," said Mr. Ellin, with that coolness which made him so convenient a counsellor in Miss Wilcox's opinion. In his dry laconism she found the response suited to her outer worldliness. She thought he said enough if he did not oppose her. The comment he stinted so avariciously she did not want.

Mr. Ellin "ran down," as he said, to Midland County. It was an errand that seemed to suit him; for he had curious predilections as well as peculiar methods of his own. Any secret quest was to his taste; perhaps there was something of the amateur detective in him. He could conduct an inquiry and draw no attention. His quiet face never looked inquisitive, nor did his sleepless eye betray vigilance.

He was away about a week. The day after his return, he appeared in Miss Wilcox's presence as cool as if he had seen her but yesterday.

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Confronting her with that fathomless face he liked to show her, he first told her he had done nothing.

Let Mr. Ellin be as enigmatical as he would, he never puzzled Miss Wilcox. She never saw enigma in the man. Some people feared, because they did not understand him ; to her it had not yet occurred to begin to spell his nature or analyze his character. If she had an impression about him, it was, that he was an idle but obliging man, not aggressive, of few words, but often convenient. Whether he were clever and deep, or deficient and shallow, close or open, odd or ordinary, she saw no practical end to be answered by inquiry, and therefore did not inquire.

"Why had he done nothing?" she now asked.

"Chiefly because there was nothing to do."

"Then he could give her no information?"

"Not much : only this, indeed—Conway Fitzgibbon was a man of straw ; May Park a house of cards. There was no vestige of such man or mansion in Midland County, or in any other shire in England. Tradition herself had nothing to say about either the name of the place. The Oracle of old deeds and registers, when consulted, had not responded."

"Who can he be, then, that came here, and who is this child?"

"That's just what I can't tell you :—an incapacity which makes me say I have done nothing."

"And how am I to get paid?"

"Can't tell you that either."

"A quarter's board and education owing, and masters' terms besides," pursued Miss Wilcox. "How infamous ! I can't afford the loss."

"And if we were only in the good old times," said Mr. Ellin, "where we ought to be, you might just send Miss Matilda out to the plantations in Virginia, sell her for what she is worth, and pay yourself."

"Matilda, indeed, and Fitzgibbon ! A little impostor ! I wonder what her real name is ?"

"Betty Hodge ? Poll Smith ? Hannah Jones ?" suggested Mr. Ellin.

"Now," cried Miss Wilcox, "give me credit for sagacity ! It's very odd, but try as I would—and I made every effort—I never could

really like that child. She has had every indulgence in this house ; and I am sure I made great sacrifice of feeling to principle in showing her much attention ; for I could not make any one believe the degree of antipathy I have all along felt towards her."

"Yes. I can believe it. I saw it."

"Did you ? Well—it proves that my discernment is rarely at fault. Her game is up now, however ; and time it was. I have said nothing to her yet ; but now—"

"Have her in whilst I am here," said Mr. Ellin. "Has she known of this business ? Is she in the secret ? Is she herself an accomplice, or a mere tool ? Have her in."

Miss Wilcox rang the bell, demanded Matilda Fitzgibbon, and the false heiress soon appeared. She came in her ringlets, her sash, and her furbelowed dress adornments—alas ! no longer acceptable.

"Stand there !" said Miss Wilcox, sternly, checking her as she approached the hearth. "Stand there on the farther side of the table. I have a few questions to put to you, and your business will be to answer them. And mind—let us have the truth. *We will not endure lies.*"

Ever since Miss Fitzgibbon had been found in the fit, her face had retained a peculiar paleness and her eyes a dark orbit. When thus addressed, she began to shake and blanch like conscious guilt personified.

"Who are you ?" demanded Miss Wilcox. "What do you know about yourself ?"

A sort of half-interjection escaped the girl's lips ; it was a sound expressing partly fear, and partly the shock the nerves feel when an evil, very long expected, at last and suddenly arrives.

"Keep yourself still, and reply, if you please," said Miss Wilcox, whom nobody should blame for lacking pity, because nature had not made her compassionate. "What is your name ? We know you have no right to that of Matilda Fitzgibbon."

She gave no answer.

"I do insist upon a reply. Speak you shall, sooner or later. So you had better do it at once."

This inquisition had evidently a very strong effect upon the subject of it. She stood as if palsied, trying to speak, but apparently not competent to articulate.

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Miss Wilcox did not fly into a passion, but she grew very stern and urgent ; she spoke a little loud ; and there was a dry clamour in her raised voice which seemed to beat upon the ear and bewilder the brain. Her interest had been injured—her pocket wounded—she was vindicating her rights—and she had no eye to see, and no nerve to feel, but for the point in hand. Mr. Ellin appeared to consider himself strictly a looker-on ; he stood on the hearth very quiet.

At last the culprit spoke. A low voice escaped her lips. "Oh, my head !" she cried, lifting her hands to her forehead. She staggered, but caught the door and did not fall. Some accusers might have been startled by such a cry—even silenced ; not so Miss Wilcox. She was neither cruel nor violent ; but she was coarse, because insensible. Having just drawn breath, she went on, harsh as ever.

Mr. Ellin, leaving the hearth, deliberately paced up the room as if he were tired of standing still, and would walk a little for a change. In returning and passing near the door and the criminal, a faint breath seemed to seek his ear, whispering his name—

"Oh, Mr. Ellin !"

The child dropped as she spoke. A curious voice—not like Mr. Ellin's, though it came from his lips—asked Miss Wilcox to cease speaking, and say no more. He gathered from the floor what had fallen on it. She seemed overcome, but not unconscious. Resting beside Mr. Ellin, in a few minutes she again drew breath. She raised her eyes to him.

"Come, my little one ; have no fear," said he.

Reposing her head against him, she gradually became reassured. It did not cost him another word to bring her round ; even that strong trembling was calmed by the mere effects of his protection. He told Miss Wilcox, with remarkable tranquillity, but still with a certain decision, that the little girl must be put to bed. He carried her upstairs, and saw her laid there himself. Returning to Miss Wilcox, he said :

"Say no more to her. Beware, or you will do more mischief than you think or wish. That kind of nature is very different from yours. It is not possible that you should like it ; but let it alone. We will talk more on the subject to-morrow. Let me question her."

A Century of Words

BY IVOR BROWN

THE centenary of *The Cornhill* magazine and the consequent reading of some of its earliest numbers have reminded me of the extent to which the English language has been altering. The change has been a double one with two strongly contrasted phases. To put it simply, sentences have grown thinner and words, especially words likely to appear in the academic curriculum, have grown fatter. It becomes obvious from a perusal of the style favoured in 1860 that the written prose of the period was close to the prose of oratory : it came surging along with the sounding waves of rhetoric. It had echoes of Gibbon : it had the amplitude to be found in the political speeches of Mr. Gladstone, who was then Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Liberal Government of Lord Palmerston. A writer on military topics who was discussing the risks of an invasion could let himself go in this fashion.

"The Government would be powerless for anything but "making terms" with the invading foe ; Parliament would be nowhere ; martial law alone would prevail ; our glorious old Constitution would be abrogated, and the monarchy itself might be in jeopardy. The day of England's disgrace and humiliation might inaugurate a saturnalia of brutal soldiery ; crime and misery, such as the imagination recoils from conceiving, might desolate our hearths and homes ; and destruction of property to the value of untold millions would involve paralysis of commerce, death of credit, stoppage of manufacture, ruin of trade, and the dissolution of every bond of law and society : nay, even this frightful calamity might be heightened by the horrors of the sack of London."

Perhaps the author was intending to face the electorate : he certainly had what was rudely called 'the gift of the gab.' No 'military correspondent' of today would lay it on like that since we have

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dicted the prose of argument. His successor would surely write 'begin' instead of 'inaugurate.' The latter word, incidentally, was wrongly as well as cumbrously employed, since it properly means 'to invest with a sacred character' and 'to consecrate.' 'A saturnalia of brutal soldiery' is hardly a procedure which merits this kind of blessing.

But while we have thinned the prose of the journalists we have admitted a new verbal obesity in the vocabulary of the schools and universities. There is a paradoxical situation to be discovered here. While Latin and Greek are much less generally taught in Great Britain than they were a hundred years ago and much less required in entrance examinations up to university level, these languages are constantly and increasingly employed in forming the lingo of the new sciences and inventions. Science of necessity increases its share of our studies and the classical languages are pushed into a corner to make room for it. But the classics may be said to get their own back since the scientists and technicians cannot think of new English names and either drag their vocabulary, often of monstrous size, out of the classical dictionaries or cook up technical terms by massing together the roots of Greek and Latin words. Molière's bourgeois gentleman, M. Jourdain, when receiving linguistic instruction, was surprised to discover that he had been talking prose for many years. The modern scientist, contemptuous perhaps of 'dead languages,' may be astonished to learn that he is continually speaking them.

The habit of naming the invented machines and processes by recourse to the ancient Greeks began early and was much accelerated with the multiplication of the new devices. Notable examples were telegram and telephone which are translations of the Greek 'far-write' and 'far-speak.' This custom has been extended in a muddled way to the word television, which is a confusion of Latin and Greek. It would now be thought pedantic to insist on television being called teleoptics. Had this domestic blessing been discovered fifty or a hundred years ago, it might have been so called with the correctness applied to telephone and telegram. But once these verbal arrivals have been established, there is no going back and television is certainly an easier word to say.

Replacement of excessive classicism can be tried, but there does not

seem to be much future in it. I have a friend who puts, or used to put, his telephone number on his note-paper as a 'Farspeak' number. But, rational though Farspeak may be, I have seen no more of it.

The Greek 'logos' gave us our words ending in -ology and these have multiplied with a frightening fertility. Sociology, for example, was accepted, with a rather frigid welcome, as a novelty in 1860, when the societies in which we live were not subject to the intense study, analysis, and documentation which they receive today. One who is determined to avoid the classical formations, as in the use of Farspeak, might call sociology folk-lore, but that term has been narrowed down to a special meaning of its own. The word folk has become closely attached to such ancestral activities as singing, dancing, and the telling of legendary tales and would look odd in connection with the study of modern society. The -ologies have swarmed in to stay and to increase; we are beset by them daily and often confusedly.

When the -ology termination is added to a word it should indicate the study or theories about the article which the word describes. Terminology is an obvious instance. That word was originally and properly used to denote the science of word-usage, but now it is only a swollen name for the words themselves. In his early Parliamentary days Sir Winston Churchill described a false statement as 'a terminological inexactitude.' He did so in jest, but terminological has now come to mean no more than verbal. A frequent and annoying example of this habit is the writing of ideology where all that is meant is ideas. Ideology, according to my trusted authority, the *Oxford English Dictionary*, began its life as far back as 1796. It then meant 'the science of ideas; the study of the origin and nature of ideas.' But the build-up process has been at work, the process by which extra syllables are laid on like layers of fat. Now the sociologist discusses the ideology of a philosopher, politician or economist. But usually 'the ideology of Karl Marx' means no more than the ideas propagated by the author of *Das Kapital*.

The addiction to additional syllables appears to be a spreading and incurable malady. The word transportation had a special meaning, i.e. the export of condemned law-breakers from Britain during the first half of the last century: now it is an alternative to the shorter

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and simpler transport. When a party is organised we read that 'transportation will be laid on.' This would have had a menacing sound to an early Victorian who could have envisaged a fettered voyage in one of the 'hulks' appointed for the convicts. Perhaps we shall soon see that cliché for extreme felicity, transports of joy, putting on a couple of syllables and becoming transportations of delight. There is no distaste nowadays for obesity in words, however strong may be our distaste for it in the human form. The owners of physical perfection, when appearing before a film-camera, are never photographed on anything so simple as the 'spot.' They are 'on location.' Nor are they given a job or a part: they are allotted an assignment. Presumably they are, with these classicisms, made to feel more important.

Yet, while the vocabulary of prose has, especially as a vehicle of academic communication, put on weight, the poets have gone the other way and imposed a banting regimen. It has been their habit down the centuries, and even down the millennia, to use a language that was more decorative than their normal speech and a trifle antiquated. In the earliest days of the epic, Homer repeatedly alluded to the rosy-fingered dawn, but one cannot imagine the Greeks who heard or read this phrase with pleasure calling the dawn rosy-fingered when it was time to get up. The rosy-fingered dawn illumining the wine-dark sea was a stencil of the Homeric style, and it was obviously an enrichment of speech that was widely accepted and enjoyed.

Edmund Spenser, the author of *The Faerie Queen*, was a deliberate archaist and Shakespeare, though a supreme master of the short and simple when he drove at pathos, employed a vocabulary of great amplitude when he wanted to terrify. Hamlet, for example, asked his father's ghost why his canonised bones, hearsed in death, had burst their cerements, instead of enquiring why he had left his grave. His audience was accustomed to and probably expected a language of this kind which we may call 'poetese,' a language which has taken many forms in many centuries but has always been devised as a contrast to work-a-day prose. It was in full flow in the nineteenth century when a writer of ordinary lines for an ordinary occasion could not concoct a verse without using the special vocabulary then

deemed proper to rhyme and metre. Washington Irving, for example, contributing to a visitors' album, began

What boots that I, a vagrant wight,
From clime to clime still wandering on,

One cannot see Mr. T. S. Eliot and Mr. Auden even in boyhood presenting themselves as wights or enquiring what it bootied to accept or reject this kind of word.

The poets of today have scaled down their vocabulary to the lingo of conversational prose because they believe, with some justice, that writing poetese is a trick easily learned and wrongly used to cover up staleness of thought and imagery. It creates, in their opinion, an atmosphere both false and pretentious. That protest has been made before, notably by William Wordsworth who rejected the poetic jargon of the eighteenth century in his famous preface to the second edition of his *Lyrical Ballads* which appeared in 1800. The words of common usage were to be the vehicles of his verse. Love could now be love with the loved one's name as simple as Lucy instead of the formal ardours and raptures inspired by Chloe and similar eighteenth-century nymphs, when the darts of Cupid, the doves of Venus, and the trembling of an amorous lyre were the routine companions of the circumstance of courtship.

Thomas Edmund Brown (1830-1897), a school-master with a turn for sentimental verse, wrote a poem on his garden beginning 'A garden is a lovesome thing, God wot,' a line which was later to evoke much facetiousness on the subject of God-wotting. He rhymed wot with grot, a poetese diminutive for grotto or cave. So it was natural that any garden with coy ornamentations should be described by the subsequent ridiculers of poetese as God-wottish or full of God-wottery pottery. To write wot and also ween for know was a common practice of the Victorian poet. Brown's lovesome is a typical adjective of the time: there were similar formations such as gladsome and delightsome in the verses of the period in which antiquated forms of verbs, abandoned in prose, were retained in poetry. A. H. Clough's 'Say not the struggle nought availeth' begins a short poem much and deservedly quoted. But no writer in verse-form today would substitute availeth for avails. In 1860 people addressed

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by the poet were hailed as Ye or Thou and any arrival would be announced with the statement that 'he cometh.'

We have sliced away the antiquities and the additional syllables: the rebellion against poetese was inevitable. We no more use the Victorian lingo of wot and ween, of gladsome and lovesome, than we go back to the raptures over Chloe and the other classically named nymphs that were fashionable in the previous century. Looking at an anthology of contemporary verse one is immediately impressed by the eagerness of the poets to be as prosaic as possible in their diction. Stephen Spender, who was an air-raid relief-worker in London during the bombing in the last war, began a poem called 'Thoughts during an Air Raid' thus:

Of course, the entire effort is to put oneself
Outside the ordinary range
Of what are called statistics. A hundred are killed
In the outer suburbs.

The poem goes on to express deep feeling. But its language, starkly designed for the stark event, is in complete contrast with the poetese of 1860, and it may fairly be taken as typical of the poetical methods of today or at least of yesterday. Fortunately for T. E. Brown he did not have to bolt for shelter into his garden-grot from a shower of high explosive. God wots what he would have written of such an experience. None the less actions and reactions are constant in all the arts and it is fairly certain that before long the younger poets will grow weary of verbal abstinence and will return to cultivating their own 'flowers of speech.' They may abjure antiquarian forms; but the resonant and decorative word will not stay in exile for ever.

Delving amid the language of mid-Victorian writing one discovers many words that have radically changed their meaning. A notable example is the present employment of the word executive used as a noun. We now often meet an industrial boss or tycoon described as 'a big executive,' meaning one who decides policy, makes decisions, and gives orders. But executive, derived from the Latin 'exsequor—I follow out,' should mean not one who commands but one who obeys, following out the orders issued from above. The British Civil

Service, whose present form was being built up in mid-Victorian times, retains the word executive with its early meaning. Its Executive Class ranks below the Administrative Class. It does not originate policy: it executes it.

The adjective 'relaxed' provides another case in point. Now it is a word of praise, signifying one who is free of nervous anxieties and painful tensions. The relaxed man has all his faculties under control: an athlete is said to win his victories because of his capacity for relaxing. I have seen oarsmen commended for the relaxed rowing which put them ahead and a golfer regarded with admiration for being so relaxed on the first tee. But when I was re-reading Charlotte Brontë's *Villette* I came across a description of a man 'as having a feeble and relaxed character.' She was censuring him as idle and sluggish. To the readers of 1860 a relaxed athlete would have been one who was going to disgrace himself and get nowhere at all. But now we can mention a friend with the words 'You are sure to like him. He's so relaxed.' The old meaning does, however, linger on in its application to places and climates, at least in England. The historic city of Bath is praised for its Georgian elegance, but not commended if the speaker adds, 'But you'll find it very relaxing.' Charlotte Brontë could have written that. But she could never have said of an industrial tycoon that his success as a Big Executive was due to his being so relaxed. I see nothing to complain about in changes of meaning: life is a series of changes and words to keep alive must alter. Not all usages are elegant or praiseworthy, but, by shedding verbosity in prose and verse, our language has altered for the better.

EYRE & SPOTTISWOODE

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The Baldwin Age

Vamp's Progress

A Study in late Nineteenth-century Affectation

BY DONALD BRUCE

THE muscle of the throat flexes like a snake to support the poised jut of the chin. A confused heaviness of hair settles over slow, cold eyes. How often we recognise these features in late nineteenth-century painting! We glance at the titles and notice how arresting they are: Salome, Lilith, Astarte, Lucrezia Borgia. These are exactly the features, and exactly the subjects, which haunted the poets of the time, and under all her different names the woman is the same. One day I decided to find out more about her. Who was she, where did she come from and why did she stay so long? My investigations led me into an obscure milieu of dust-blown letters, lurking Parisian galleries, and books which the majority of people, very sensibly, seldom trouble to read. Gradually my knowledge of her movements became more accurate. The pile of books on my desk mounted and then diminished. My dossier neared completion. One of the addresses proved to be a false one, but I will say more about that later.

Dolores, as for the time being I christened her, started off from nowhere more exotic than New England in 1844. Edgar Allen Poe's mystery stories were appearing for the first time, and the young Nathaniel Hawthorne wanted to show that he could write the same sort of thing, although in better taste. In this way he came to think up the story of Rappaccini's daughter. Rappaccini, a 'Gothick' botanist, had specialised all his life in poisonous plants. His daughter grew up amongst them, playing in their undergrowth, nibbling them, rubbing them into her skin. In due course she became poisonous herself. Bouquets withered in her hands, ordinary unpoisoned air made her swoon. She took on the dim venomous

look of the plants which she had made part of her. Hawthorne observes that 'her love would have been poison and her embrace death.' So indeed it was for a young man called Giovanni, whom she admitted to the garden. At the end of the story the expiring Giovanni exclaims, "And finding thy solitude wearisome, thou hast enticed me likewise into thy region of unspeakable horror. Thou hast filled my veins with poison! Now if our breath be happily as fatal to ourselves as to others, let us join our lips in one kiss of unutterable hatred and so die." In his notebook Hawthorne suggested that the story 'might be symbolic of something.'

It was not long before Rappaccini's daughter crossed the Atlantic to France, where the air, at that time, was likely to agree with her. There are a number of types of Romantic *femme fatale* which are discussed in Mario Praz's excellent book *The Romantic Agony*, but this toxic variant of Hawthorne's is something which even Praz has overlooked. She was unloosed on the Continent in a translation by Theophile Gautier, who had already written a story about a pale but bloody-mouthed vampire called Clarimonde.

The younger French writers were in revolt against the philosophy of the ascendant middle class, which was to keep good order and make a profit. So greatly did their conduct deviate from middle-class standards that when Baudelaire dyed his hair green he was accused of being commonplace. The frequently arrested Gerard de Nerval habitually ranged the streets of Paris at night, a one-man rising, shouting, "Down with the sneaking bourgeoisie!" Petrus Borel belligerently prefaced his first book with the words, 'A child must discharge its dribble. Here it is!' With a dislike of the middle-class went a dislike of the older poets, whose lyrics about Nature were to be found, bound in crimson velvet and even in fur, in all the polite bourgeois drawing rooms. Baudelaire's generation would have nothing to do with a Nature which seemed to be jointly managed by God and Victor Hugo. Asked why he did not write poems about woods and meadows and flowers, Baudelaire replied that it was because he was incapable of taking vegetables seriously. Edmond de Goncourt spoke for them all when he stated: 'Nothing is less poetic than Nature.' Anatole France might have been referring, not only to Baudelaire, but to the whole group of poets around

Baudelaire, when he said that he was hungry, with an invalid appetite, for everything which is artificial.

For these reasons there was a reaction against the ideal bourgeois, or style *Rothsilde*, woman, and what appeared to them to be her clamorous carnal mushiness. Baudelaire claimed that he found woman abominable because they are so natural, adding: 'They are also vulgar, that is to say the opposite of the dandy.' He compared Love to torture or a surgical operation. How much more interesting for a conscientious dandy to write hate-lyrics instead of love-lyrics! The idea of Rappaccini's daughter had arrived just in time.

The effect of Gautier's translation was immediate. Every small jaded poet began to write verses to the mistress who brings extinction. 'It was the fashion,' remarked Gautier in his reminiscences, 'to be pale and greenish-looking; to seem consumed by the effects of passion and remorse; to talk sadly and fancifully about Death.' Gustave Moreau started on the first of the eleven hundred paintings which remained unsold at his death. (These portrayals, one of which later inspired Oscar Wilde to write *Salome*, of the bad women of all ages always recede into a half-lit menacing glitter suggestive of a jewelled Inca skull.) Above all, Rappaccini's daughter was brought to the notice of Baudelaire.

Baudelaire was quick to decide what the story symbolised. It symbolised Jeanne Duval, the mulatto with whom he had an inept and calamitous love-affair. He kept her portrait, inscribed 'Seeking whom she devour,' in his study, on a wall painted with great spotted orchids. In that dark room on the Île de St. Louis he wrote, with great care, *Les Fleurs du Mal*, a record of his bottomless malice. Jeanne Duval is the chief of the beasts who have, he says, eaten up his heart. Implacable, as strong as a herd of devils, she fights a duel with him under a livid sky. Boredom torments her cruel soul, and she drinks the blood of the world. She and her sisters of *Les Fleurs du Mal*, dancing serpents, vampires, monsters, are venomous and sterile. Like Rappaccini's daughter they overpower and destroy any man who approaches them. Like Rappaccini's daughter they are doomed themselves. 'Fly,' Baudelaire tells them, 'fly across deserts, solitary as wolves, from the infinity which you carry within you. Fly, with the wind of desire making your skin flap like an old flag.'

Vamp's Progress

Five years later Swinburne lay in a Turkish bath, suffering. The hangover which had driven him there was one of many. With him was a copy of *Les Fleurs du Mal*, and he was writing a review of it. The setting was perfect: steam, prostration and somnolence. The book took hold of his dwindled mind. It was to dominate him for the rest of his life. In the great heat he savoured 'the dangerous hothouse scents of this book,' and shared 'the acid relish of suffering felt or inflicted.' The main appeal of Baudelaire was to a grotesque aspect of Swinburne's personality. The wilful little man, unlike most of us, wanted nothing more than to become 'the powerless victim of the furious rage of a beautiful woman.' No angry lady, alas, was available. Women did not care for Swinburne. In his mind the boundary between fact and fantasy was far from certain. Would not Rappaccini's daughter, via Baudelaire, do just as well? Thus she became Dolores. In the same way that Baudelaire had projected Hawthorne's story on the screen of Jeanne Duval, so now Swinburne projected *Les Fleurs du Mal* on the screen of his own unusual inclinations.

Given his theme, Swinburne wrote about it, as he wrote about most things which caught his fancy, in all too exhaustive detail. He composed under a kind of hypnotic compulsion, like a child which takes up a phrase and rings the changes on it for hour after hour. We hear of his lopsided prancing around the house which he shared with Rossetti, as he invoked from his incredible memory every wicked woman whom he had ever read about. Pirouetting and with verse following verse, his large red head jerking on his tiny body, he looked like a garden mandarin set in violent motion. In the strangled scream which was natural to him, he named Cleopatra, Semiramis, Pasiphae, Messalina—Dolores, that pallid and poisonous queen, daughter of Passion and Death—Faustine, intent on the gladiators. Another bottle was empty and Swinburne was ticking over: Venus at the Horsel, her gateway smoking with unassuaged desires, sombre beauties, insatiable, merciless as the devil, barren as poison. At last Swinburne collapsed in a state of alcoholic exhaustion. The scribbled papers, which covered the whole room like a fallen ceiling, fluttered and fell into place. The torments of composition were over.

Somewhere between one dram and another Swinburne had hit

upon the complete physiognomy of Dolores. In the rhythmic spate of his verse he omits no detail. One could easily draw a picture of her. She has a sterile beauty, *subtle and sleek*. Her cruel red mouth is like a poisonous flower, and her eyes are as hard as jewels. The highlights of her thick hair shift from dead blue to burnt-up black. She has a strong heavy throat which throws out her face and firm shining chin.

One could easily draw a picture of her, and Rossetti did. In describing the *femme fatale* of Swinburne, I have indeed also described the woman whom Rossetti painted again and again, even in his so-called portraits. It is true that these pictures are ponderously Victorian, with a lush predominance of purples, dark browns and crimsons. Even the Liliths and Proserpines look as if they had read John Ruskin and, taking notes, attended the Great Exhibition. Yet the whole conception of Dolores, with its ornateness and its over-driven anguish, was especially well suited to the taste of the time. Is not a great deal of Swinburne the verbal equivalent of Victorian bric-à-brac?

We have followed Dolores' movements from Hawthorne to Rossetti. Although the type never changed much, each writer or painter contributed something new towards it. Rossetti's woman has all the sleepiness of her creator, but this visual Dolores was soon to be shaken from her slumbers by the hectic wit of Aubrey Beardsley. The hothouse door was opened just wide enough for humour to slip in.

Everyone in a position of conspicuous public virtue, preacher, professor or reviewer, condemned Swinburne's book when it came out. One priest compared Swinburne unfavourably with anti-Christ. This only added to the enthusiasm felt for *Poems and Ballads* by the student generation. At Oxford it was responsible for a surprising demonstration during which, we are told, a crowd of undergraduates chanted the whole of *Dolores* (and there is a lot of it) outside All Saints' Church. The frail eroding city was disturbed by some remarkable sentiments:

*Thou wert fair in the fearless old fashion
And thy limbs are as melodies yet,
And move to the music of passion
And lithe and lascivious regret.*

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It is not surprising that when Oscar Wilde came up to Oxford eight years later he became a careful imitator of Swinburne's poetry. The odour of lilies and orchids on the shabby Gothic staircases was still distinct and pervasive. In *The Sphinx*, a compost of Swinburnean images, Wilde writes about a pulse which makes poisonous melodies, and a mouth which resembles a scorch-mark on a barbaric tapestry. But it was not until 1893 that he was inspired by Gustave Moreau's painting to write *Salome*. The play, written with painstaking devilry in French, has little resemblance to the biblical story, and is another variant on the theme of Dolores. Whilst he was thinking out the play he went into a restaurant and requested the leader of the orchestra to play something suggestive of 'a woman dancing with her bare feet in the blood of a man whom she has craved for and slain.'

Aubrey Beardsley illustrated the English translation of *Salome*, and although Wilde took the play lightly himself, it was not so impertinently lightly as Beardsley did. Wilde did not like the illustrations at all, observing that 'they are cruel and evil and so like dear Aubrey.' In Beardsley's drawings the Dolores of Rossetti is trimmed down into a stark tight arrangement of black and white. Older artists have left their mark on Beardsley's style. One finds hints everywhere of the linear calculation of Mantegna, the eagerly imaginative concepts and leafy eroticism of Botticelli, Durer's measured violence. He surrounds his figures with manneristic decorations, steeply flaring candles, pierrots, chrysanthemums, peacocks, water-lilies. Yet the woman is the same one. She is Dolores, as described by Swinburne and painted by Rossetti, but this time she is an object of satire.

The spread of an affectation always ends it, and in *Salome* the poison-woman makes her last important appearance. She had already flitted to the novel, and there she scrappily survived. In Zola's *La Curée* Renée Saccard plans wickedness in the toxic fumes of her conservatory. She waits behind a deadly plant, the smallest veins of which distil a poisonous juice. Absentmindedly, her mouth parched and irritated, she nibbles at one of the leaves. And so the trouble starts.

As a literary whim, Dolores was generally outmoded by another type of heroine, the New Woman of Shaw and Wells. Late and heavy-handed the German writers took Dolores up, and gave Pabst



THE DARK GODDESS : Rossetti's 'Proserpine'

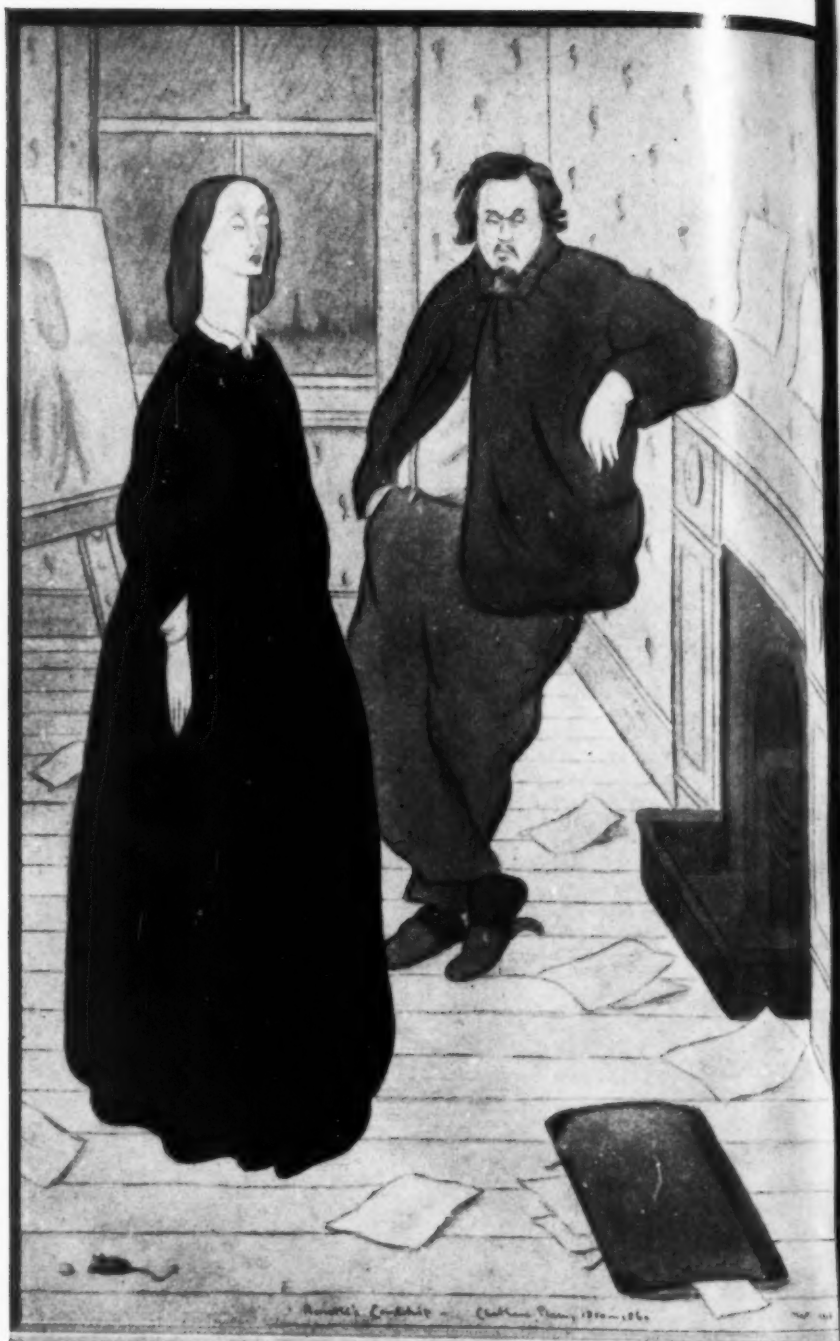
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QUAESENS QUEM DEVORENS by Charles Baudelaire.
(From his *Selected Poems*, Falcon Press Ltd., 1946)



AN 1890 APOTHEOSIS : illustration to *Salome* by Aubrey Beardsley.
(From *The best of Beardsley*, Bodley Head, 1948)



ROSSETTI AND HIS MUSE : 'Rossetti's Courtship 1850-1860,' by Sir Max Beerbohm

(Reproduced by courtesy of the Trustees of the Tate Gallery, London)

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the idea for a series of gloomily magnificent films, the best known of which is *Pandora's Box*. I had hoped to find in Max Beerbohm's *Zuleika Dobson* the literary equivalent of Beardsley's satire. Indeed I had assumed that our last sight of Dolores would be when, under one of her many assumed names, she caught the train to Cambridge. But this is not so. In a letter which he sent me a short while before his death, Beerbohm wrote: 'I am less literary than you suppose. The idea of *Zuleika* occurred to me without thought of Dolores or *Salome*. I had merely heard of some woman of whom, in the Second Empire, it is reputed that no fewer than four men had committed suicide on her account. I thought, frivolously, "Why only four?" And so on. . .'

With that faint pencilled articulation from the hand which had shaken Swinburne's and which, sadly, will now write no more, one returns to an engaging atmosphere of commonsense. And Rappaccini's daughter, as Hawthorne told us in the beginning, 'faints in common air.'

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MACMILLAN

A Dedicated Man

BY ELIZABETH TAYLOR

IN the dark, raftered dining-room, Silcox counted the coned napkins and, walking among the tables, lifted the lids of the mustard pots and shook salt level in the cellars.

At the beginning of their partnership as waiter and waitress, Edith had liked to make mitres or fleur-de-lys or water-lilies of the napkins, and Silcox, who thought this great vulgarity, waited until after he had made his proposal and been accepted before he put a stop to it. She had listened meekly. "Edwardian vulgarity," he had told her. Taking a roll of bread from the centre of the petalled linen, he whipped the napkin straight, then turned it deftly into a dunce's cap.

Edith always came down a little after Silcox. He left the bedroom in plenty of time for her to change into her black dress and white apron. His proposal had not included marriage or any other intimacy and, although they lay every night side by side in twin beds, they were always decorous in their behaviour, fanatically prim, and he had never so much as seen her take a brush to her hair, as he himself might have said. However, there was no one to say it to, and to the world, they were Mr. and Mrs. Silcox, a plain, respectable couple. Both were ambitious, both had been bent on leaving the hotel where they first met—a glorified boarding-house, Silcox called it. Both, being snobbish, were galled at having to wait on noisy, sunburnt people who wore freakish and indecent holiday clothes and could not pronounce *crêpes de volaille*, let alone understand what it meant.

By the time Silcox heard of the vacancy at The Royal George, he had become desperate beyond measure, irritated at every turn by the vulgarities of seaside life. The Royal George was mercifully as inland as anywhere in England can be. The thought of the Home Counties soothed him. He visualised the landscape embowered in flowering trees.

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In his interview with the manageress he had been favourably impressed by the tone of the hotel. The Thames flowed by beyond the geranium-bordered lawns; there would be star occasions all summer—the Fourth of June, Henley, Ascot. The dining-room, though it was small, had velvet-cushioned banquettes and wine-lists in padded leather covers. The ashtrays advertised nothing and the flowers had not come out of the garden.

"My wife," he said repeatedly during the interview. He had been unable to bring her, from consideration to their employer. The manageress respected him for this and for very much else. She could imagine him in tails and he seemed to wear the grey suit as if it were a regrettable informality he had been unable to escape. He was stately, eyes like a statue's, mouth like a carp's. His deference would have that touch of condescension which would make customers angle for his good will. Those to whom he finally unbent, with a remark about the weather or the compliments of the season, would return again and again, bringing friends to whom they could display their status. "Maurice always looks after me," they would say.

Returning to the pandemonium—the tripperish hotel, the glaring sky—he made his proposal to Edith. 'Married couple,' the advertisement had stipulated and was a necessary condition, he now understood, for only one bedroom was available. "It has twin bedsteads, I ascertained," he said.

Marriage, he explained, could not be considered, as he was married already. Where the person in question (as he spoke of his wife) was at present, he said he did not know. She had been put behind him.

Until that day, he had never spoke to Edith of his personal affairs, although they had worked together for a year. She was reserved herself and embarrassed by this unexpected lapse, though by the proposal itself she felt deeply honoured. It set the seal on his approval of her work.

"I think I am right in saying that it is what matters most to both of us," he observed, and she nodded. She spoke very little and never smiled.

The manageress of The Royal George, when Edith went for her separate interview, wondered if she were not too grim. At forty-five, her hair was a streaked grey and clipped short like a man's at the

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back. She had no make-up and there were deep lines about her mouth which had come from the expression of disapproval she so often wore. On the other hand, she was obviously dependable and efficient, would never slop soup or wear dirty cuffs or take crafty nips of gin in the stillroom whenever there was a lull. Her predecessor had done these things and been flighty, too.

So Edith and Silcox were engaged. Sternly and without embarrassment they planned arrangements for bedroom privacy. These were simply a matter of one staying in the bathroom while the other dressed or undressed in the bedroom. Edith was first to get into bed and would then turn out the light. Silcox was meanwhile sitting on a laundry basket in his dressing-gown, glancing at his watch until it was time to return. He would get into bed in the dark. He never wished her good-night and hardly admitted to himself that she was there.

Now a week had gone by and the arrangements had worked so smoothly that he was a little surprised this evening that on the stroke of seven o'clock she did not appear. Having checked his tables, he studied the list of bookings and was pleased to note the name of one of his *bêtes-noires*. This would put a spur to his pride and lift the evening out of the ordinary ruck. Pleasant people were not the same challenge.

Upstairs, Edith was having to hurry, something she rarely deigned to do. She was even a little excited as she darted about the room, looking for clean cuffs and apron, fresh dress preservers and some pewter-coloured stockings, and she kept pausing to glance at a photograph on the chest of drawers. It was postcard size and in a worn leather frame and was of an adolescent boy wearing a school blazer.

When she had gone back to the bedroom after breakfast she saw the photograph for the first time. Silcox had placed it there without a word. She ignored it for a while and then became nervous that one of the maids might question her about it, and it was this reason she gave Silcox for having asked him who it was.

"Our son," he said.

He deemed it expedient, he added, that he should be a family man. The fact would increase their air of dependability and give them background and reality and solid worth. The boy was at a public school,

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he went on, and did not divulge to his friends the nature of his parents' profession. Silcox, Edith realised with respect, was so snobbish that he looked down upon himself.

"How old is he?" she asked in an abrupt tone.

"He is seventeen and working for the Advanced Level."

Edith did not know what this was and wondered how she would manage to support the fantasy.

"We shall say nothing ourselves," said Silcox, "as we are not in the habit of discussing our private affairs. But he is there if wanted."

"What shall we . . . what is his name?"

"Julian," Silcox said and his voice sounded rich and musical.

Edith looked with some wonder at the face in the photograph. It was a very ordinary face and she could imagine the maids conjecturing at length as to whom he took after.

"Who is he really?" she asked.

"A young relative," said Silcox.

* * * * *

In Edith's new life there were one or two difficulties—one was trying to remember not to fidget with the wedding ring as if she were not used to wearing it, and another was being obliged to call Silcox 'Maurice.' This she thought unseemly, like all familiarities, and to be constant in it required continual vigilance. He, being her superior, had called her Edith from the start.

Sleeping beside him at night worried her less. The routine of privacy was established and sleep itself was negative and came immediately to both of them after long hours of being on their feet. They might have felt more sense of intimacy sitting beside one another in deck chairs in broad daylight, for then there would be the pitfalls of conversation. (How far to encroach? How much interest to show that could be shown without appearing inquisitive?)

Edith was one of those women who seem to know from childhood that the attraction of men is no part of their equipment, and from then on to have supported nature in what it had done for them, by exaggerating the gruffness and the gracelessness and becoming after a time sexless. She strode heavily in shoes a size too large, her off-duty grey coat and skirt were as sensible as some old Nannie's

walking-out attire. She was not much interested in people, although she did her duty towards them and wrote each week to her married sister in Australia: and was generous to her at Christmas. Her letters, clearly written as they were, were still practically unreadable—so full of facts and times, where she took the bus to on her day off and the whole route described, where this road forked and that branched off and what p.m. she entered this or that café to progress from the grapefruit to the trifle of the *Table d'Hôte* (Five and sixpence). Very poor service usually, she wrote—odd knives and forks left on the table while she drank her coffee, for no one took any pride nowadays.

Edith had no relations other than her sister; her world was peopled with hotel staff and customers. With the staff she was distant and sometimes grim if they were careless in their work, and with her customers she was distant and respectful. She hardly responded to them, although there were a very few—usually gay young men or courtly and jovial elderly ones—to whom she behaved protectively, as Nannie-ish as she looked when she wore her outdoor clothes.

The other person in her life—Silcox—was simply to her the Establishment. She had never worked with anyone she respected more—in her mind, he was always a waiter and she always thought of him dressed as a waiter. On his day off, he seemed lowered by wearing the clothes of an ordinary man. Having to turn her eyes away from him when she glimpsed him in a dressing-gown was really no worse. They were not man and woman in one another's eyes, and hardly even human beings.

No difficulties they were beset with in their early days at The Royal George could spoil the pleasures of their work. The serenity of the dining-room, the elaborate food which made demands upon them (to turn something over in flaming brandy in a chafing-dish crowned Silcox's evening), the superiority of the clientèle and the glacial table linen. They had suffered horrors from common people and this escape to elegance was precious to them both. The hazards that threatened were not connected with their work, over which both had mastery from the beginning, but with their private lives. It was agonising to Edith to realise that now they were expected to spend their free time together. On the first day off they took a bus

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to another hotel along the river and there had luncheon. Silcox modelled his behaviour on that of his own most difficult customers, and seemed to be retaliating by doing so. He was very lordly and full of knowledge and criticism. Edith, who was used to shopping ladies' luncheons in cafés, became nervous and alarmed. When she next wrote to her sister, she left this expedition altogether out of the letter and described instead some of the menus she had served at The Royal George, with prices. Nowadays, there was, for the first time in her life, an enormous amount that had to be left out of the letters.

She was dreading their next free day and was relieved when Silcox suggested that they should make a habit of taking the train to London together and there separating. If they came back on the same train in the evening no suspicions would be roused.

In London, she enjoyed wandering round the department stores, looking without surprise or envy at all the frivolous extravagancies. She made notes of prices, thinking that her sister would be interested to compare them with those in Melbourne, and she could spend a whole day over choosing a pair of gloves, going from shop to shop, studying the quality. One day, she intended to visit the Zoo.

Silcox said that he liked to look in the jewellers' windows. In the afternoons, he went to a News Cinema. Going home in the train, he read a newspaper and she looked out at the backs of houses and little gardens, and later, fields or woods, staring as if hypnotised.

One morning, when she had returned to their bedroom after breakfast, he surprised her by following her there. This was the time of day when he took a turn about the garden or strolled along by the river.

When he had shut the door, he said quietly, "I'm afraid I must ask you something. I think it would be better if you were less tidy in here. It struck me this morning that by putting everything away out of sight, you will give rise to suspicion."

Once, he had been a floor waiter in an hotel and knew, from taking breakfast in to so many married people, what their bedrooms usually looked like. His experience with his own wife he did not refer to.

"I overheard Carrie saying what a tidy pair we were and she had

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never met anyone like it, not a pin in sight when she came into this room, she said."

"I respect your intentions," he said grandly, "but the last thing to serve our purpose is to appear in any way out of the ordinary. If you could have one or two things lying about—your hairbrush, perhaps—well, I leave it to you—just a pot of something or other on the dressing-table. A wife would never hide everything away in the drawers. Carrie's right, as it is there isn't even a pin to be seen. Nothing to show it's anyone's room at all, except for the photograph."

Edith blushed and pressed her lips tightly together. She turned away and made no reply. Although she knew that it had been difficult for him to make the suggestion, and sensible and necessary as she saw it to be, she was angry with him. She wondered why his words had so humiliated her, and could find no reason. He had reproved her before about her work—the water-lily napkins, for instance—but he had never angered her.

She waited for him to leave her and then she removed from the drawer a large, harsh bristled brush, a boxful of studs and safety pins and a pot of Vaseline which she used when in cold weather her lips were chapped. In the early evening, when she came up to change, she found Silcox's brushes beside her's, a shoe-horn dangled from the side of the mirror and his dressing-gown had been taken from his clothes' cupboard and was hanging at the back of the door.

She felt very strange about it all and when she went downstairs she tried to direct all her thoughts towards her work.

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"He couldn't be anyone else's," said Carrie Hurt, the maid, looking at the photograph. She had the impertinence to take it up and go over to the window with it, to see it better.

"He is thought to take more after his father's side," Edith said, tempted to allow the conversation to continue, then wondering why this should be.

"I expect it's his father's side that says it," Carrie replied. "Oh, I can see you. The way his hair grows on his forehead. His father's got quite a widow's peak."

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Edith found herself looking over Carrie's shoulder, as if she had never seen the photograph before.

"As a matter of fact, he is a little like my sister's eldest boy," she conceded. "His cousin," she added, feeling wonder at the words.

"Well, you must be proud of him. Such an open face." Carrie said, replacing the photograph in its right position and passing a duster over the glass.

"Yes," said Edith. "He's a good boy."

She left Carrie and went downstairs and walked in the garden until it was time to go on duty. She went up and down the gravel paths and along by the river, but she could not overcome the excitement which lately disturbed her so, the sensation of shameful pleasure.

By the river's edge, she came upon Silcox, who had taken up fishing in his spare time—a useful excuse for avoiding Edith's company. He stood on the bank, watching the line where it entered the water, and hardly turned his head as Edith approached him.

"Where does he—where does Julian go to in the holidays?" she asked.

"He goes to relatives?" Silcox answered.

She knew that she was interrupting him and that she must move on. As she did, he heard her murmuring anxiously "I do so hope they're kind."

He turned his head quickly and looked after her, but she had gone mooning back across the lawn. The expression of astonishment stayed on his face for a long time after that and when she took up her position in the dining-room before lunch, he looked at her with concern, but she was her usual forbidding and efficient self again.

* * * * *

"Don't we ever go to see him?" she asked a few days later.

"Won't they think us strange not going?"

"What we do in our free time is no concern of theirs," he said.

"I only thought they'd think it strange."

He isn't real, none of it is true, she now constantly reminded herself, for sometimes her feelings of guilt about that abandoned boy grew too acute.

Sometimes, on Sunday outings from school, boys were brought

by their parents to have lunch at the hotel, and Edith found herself fussing over them, giving them huge helpings, discussing their appetites with their parents.

"They're all the same at that age," she would say. "I know."

It was unlike her to chat with the customers and quite against Silcox's code. When he commented disdainfully upon her unusual behaviour, she seemed scarcely to listen to his words. The next Sunday, serving a double portion of ice cream to a boy, she looked across at his mother and smiled. "I've a son myself, madam," she said. "I know."

Silcox, having overheard this, was too enraged to settle down to his fishing that afternoon. He looked for Edith and found her in the bedroom writing a letter to her sister.

"It was a mistake—this about the boy," he said, taking up the photograph and glaring at it. "You have not the right touch in such matters. You carry the deception to excess. You go too far."

"Too far?" she said brightly, but busy writing.

"Our position is established. I think the little flourishes I thought up had their result."

"But they were all *your* little flourishes," she said, looking up at him. "You didn't let *me* think of any, did you?"

He stared back at her and soon her eyes flickered, and she returned to her writing.

"There won't be any more," he said. "From me, or from you. Or any more discussion of our affairs, do you understand? Carrie in here every morning gossiping, you chattering to customers, telling them such a pack of lies—as if it were all true, and as if they could possibly be interested. You know as well as I do how unprofessional it is. I should never have credited it of you. Even when we were at that dreadful place at Paignton, you conducted yourself with more dignity."

"I don't see the harm," she said mildly.

"And I don't see the necessity. It's courting danger for one thing—to get so involved. We'll keep our affairs to ourselves or else we'll find trouble ahead."

"What time does the post go?"

Without reading her letter through, she pushed it into an envelope.

A Dedicated Man

Goodness knows what she has written, he thought. A mercy her sister was far away in Australia.

The photograph—the subject of their contention—he pushed aside, as if he would have liked to be rid of it.

"You don't seem to be paying much attention," he said. "I only warn you that you'd better. Unless you hope to make laughing stocks of both of us."

Before she addressed the envelope, she looked gravely at him for a moment, thinking that perhaps the worst thing that could happen to him, the thing he had always dreaded most, was to be laughed at, to lose his dignity. I used to be the same, she thought, taking up her pen.

"Yes, I made a mistake," he said. "I admit it freely. But we shall stand by it, since it's made. We can hardly kill the boy off, now we've got him."

She jerked round and looked at him, her face even paler than usual, then seemed to gather her wits again and bent her head. Writing rather slowly and unsteadily, she finished addressing the envelope.

"I hope I shan't have further cause for complaint," he said—rather as if he were her employer, as in fact he always felt himself to be. The last word duly spoken, he left her, but was frowning as he went downstairs. She was behaving oddly, something was not quite right about her and he was apprehensive.

Edith was smiling while she tidied herself before slipping out to the pillar box. 'That's the first tiff we've ever had,' she thought. 'In all our married life.'

* * * * *

"I find her all right," Carrie Hurt said to the still-room maid. "Not stand-offish, really, when you get to know her."

"It's him I can't abide."

"I'm sorry for her. The way he treats her."

"And can't you tell he's got a temper? You get that feeling, don't you, that for two pins he'd boil over?"

"Yes, I'm sorry for her. When he's not there, she likes to talk. And dotes on that boy of theirs."

"Funny life it must be, not hardly ever seeing him."

Elizabeth Taylor

"She going to soon, so she was telling me, when it's his birthday. She was showing me the sweater she was knitting for him. She's a lovely knitter."

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Silcox found Edith sitting in a secluded place at the back of the hotel where the staff were allowed to take the air. It was a cobbled courtyard, full of empty beer crates and strings of tea-towels hung to dry. Pigeons walked up and down the out-house roofs and the kitchen cat sat at Edith's feet watching them. Edith was knitting a white, cable-stitch sweater and she had a towel across her lap to keep the wool clean.

"I have just overheard that Carrie Hurt and the still-room girl discussing you," Silcox said, when he had looked round to make sure that there was no one to overhear him. "What is this nonsense about going to see the boy, or did my ears deceive me?"

"They think we're unnatural. I felt so ashamed about it that I said I'd be going on his birthday."

"And when is *that*, pray?"

"Next month, The eighteenth. I'll have the sweater done by then."

She picked up the knitting pattern, studied it frowning.

"Oh, it is, is it? You've got it all cut and dried. But his birthday happens to be in March."

"You can't choose everything," she said. She was going on with her knitting and smiling.

"I forbid you to say any more about the boy."

"You can't, you see. People ask me how he's getting on."

"I wish I hadn't started the damn fool business."

"I don't. I'm so glad you did."

"You'll land us in gaol, do you realise that? And what is this you're knitting?" He knew, from the conversation he had overheard.

"A sweater for him, for Julian."

"Do you know what?" he said, leaning towards her and almost spitting the words at her, one after the other, "I think you're going out of your mind. You'll have to go away from here. Maybe we'd both better go, and it will be the parting of the ways."

A Dedicated Man

"I don't see any cause for that," said Edith. "I've never been so happy."

* * * * *

But her happiness was nearly at an end: even before she could finish knitting the sweater, the spell had been broken.

A letter came from her sister, Hilda, in Melbourne. She wrote much less frequently than Edith and usually only when she had something to boast about—this time it was one of the boys having won a tennis tournament.

'She has always patronised me,' Edith thought. 'I have never harped on in that way about Julian. I don't see why I should have hidden his light under a bushel all these years.'

She sat down at once and wrote a long letter about his different successes. Whatever Hilda's sons may have done, Julian seemed to find it easy to do better. "We are sending him for a holiday on the continent as a reward for passing his exams," she finished up. She was tired of silence and modesty. Those qualities had never brought her any joy, none of the wonderful exhilaration and sense of richness she had now. Her attitude towards life had been too drab and undemanding; she could plainly see this.

She took her letter to the village and posted it. She imagined her sister looking piqued—not puzzled—when she read it.

Silcox was in the bedroom when she returned. A drawer slid quickly shut and he was suddenly busy winding his watch. "Well, I suppose it's time to put my hand to the wheel," he said in a voice less cold than it had been of late, as he went out.

Edith was suspicious of this voice, which was too genial, she thought, and she looked round to see if anything of hers had been tampered with. She was especially anxious about her knitting, which was so precious to her; but it was still neatly rolled up and hanging in a clean laundry-bag in her cupboard.

She opened the drawer which Silcox had so smartly closed and found a letter lying on top of a pile of black woollen socks. A photograph was half out of the envelope. Though he had thrust it out of sight when she came into the room, she realised that he had been perfectly easy in his mind about leaving it where it was, for it would be contrary to his opinion of her that she would pry or probe.

Elizabeth Taylor

'He knows nothing about me,' she thought, taking the photograph to the window so that she could see it better.

She was alarmed at the way her heart began to leap and hammer, and she pressed her hand to her breast and whispered, 'Hush' to it's loud beating. 'Hush, hush,' she implored it and sat down on her bed to wait for the giddiness to pass.

When she was steadier, she looked again at the two faces in the photograph. There was no doubt that one of them was Julian's, though older than she had imagined and more defined than in the other photograph—the one that stood always on the chest-of-drawers.

It was so much like the face of the middle-aged woman whom his arm encircled so affectionately, who wore the smug, pleased smile of a mother whose son has been teasing her. She glowed with delight, her lips ready to shape fond remonstrances. She looked a pretty, silly woman and wore a flowered, full-skirted dress, too girlish for her, too tight across the bust. They were standing by the wooden fence of a little garden. Behind them, hollyhocks grew untidily and a line of washing, having flapped in the wind as the camera clicked, hung there, blurred, above their heads. Julian had stared at the photographer, grinning foolishly, almost pulling a face. 'It's all put on,' thought Edith. 'All for the effect.'

When her legs stopped trembling, she went again to the drawer and fetched the letter. She could only read a little of it at a time, because the feeling of faintness and nausea came upon her in waves and she would wait, with closed eyes, till each receded. After seeing 'Dear Father' she was as still as a stone, until she could brace herself for more, for the rest of the immaturely-written, facetious letter. It contained abrupt and ungracious thanks for a watch he had received for what he referred to as his twenty-first. He seemed, Edith thought, to have expected more. A good time had been had by all, with Mum pushing the boat out to the best of her ability. They were still living in Streatham and he was working in a car showroom, where, he implied, he spent his time envying his customers. Things weren't too easy, although Mum was wonderful, of course. When he could afford to take her out, which he only wished he were able to do more often, she enjoyed herself as if she were a young girl. It was nice of his father to have thought of him, he ended reproachfully.

A Dedicated Man

Carrie Hurt pushed the bedroom door open at the same time as she wrapped on it with her knuckles. "I was to say would you come down at once, Edith. There's some people in the dining-room already."

"I shan't be coming down," Edith said.

"Don't you feel well?"

"Tell him I shan't be coming down."

Edith turned her head away and remained like that until Carrie had gone. Quietly, she sat and waited for Silcox to arrive. He would do so, she knew, as soon as he could find the manageress or a maid to take his place for a moment. It would offend his pride to allow such a crisis, but he would be too seriously alarmed to prevent it.

Her hatred was now so heavy that it numbed her and she was able to sit, quite calm and patient, waiting for him, rehearsing no speeches, made quite incapable by the suddenness of the calamity and the impossibility of accepting the truth of it.

It was not so very long before she heard his hurrying footsteps. He entered the room as she had thought he would, brimming with pompous indignation. She watched this fade and another sort of anger take its place when he saw the letter in her hand, the photograph on the bed.

"No, your eyes don't deceive you," she said.

At first, he could think of nothing better to say than "How dare you!" He said this twice, but as it was clearly inadequate, he stepped forward and grasped her wrists, gripping them tightly, shook her back and forth until her teeth were chattering. Not for years, not since the days of his brief marriage, had he so treated a woman and he had forgotten the overwhelming sensations to be derived from doing so. He released her, but only to hit her across her face with the back of one hand then the other.

Shaken, but unfrightened, she stared at him. "It was true all the time," she said. "He was really yours and you disowned him. Yet you made up that story just to have a reason for putting out the photograph and looking at it every day."

"Why should I want to do that? He means nothing to me." He hoped to disconcert her by a quick transition to indifference.

"And his mother—I was supposed to be his mother."

Elizabeth Taylor

He laughed theatrically at the absurdity of this idea. It was a bad performance. When he had finished being doubled-up, he wiped his eyes and said: "Excuse me." The words were breathed on a sigh of exquisite enjoyment.

Coming to the door for the second time, Carrie Hurt waited after knocking. She had been surprised to hear Silcox laughing so loudly as she came along the passage. She had never heard him laugh in any way before and wondered if he had gone suddenly mad. He opened the door to her, looking grave and dignified.

"Yes, I am coming now," he said.

"They're very busy. I was told to say if you could please . . ."

"I repeat, I am coming now. Edith is unwell and we must manage for today as best we may without her. She will stay here and rest," he added, turning and saying this directly to Edith and stressing his even tone by a steady look. He would have locked the door upon her if Carrie had not been standing by.

Edith was then alone and began to cry. She chafed her wrists that were still reddened from his grasp, and moved her head from side to side, as if trying to evade the thoughts that crowded on her.

Carrie Hurt returned presently with a glass of brandy. "It can't do any harm," she said. "He told me to leave you alone, but there might be something she wants, I thought."

She put the glass on the table beside the bed and then went over to draw the curtains. Edith sat still, with her hands clasped in her lap, and waited for her to go.

"My mother has these funny spells," Carrie told her. Then, noticing the letter lying on the bed, she asked, "Oh you haven't had any bad news, have you?"

"Yes," Edith said.

She leaned forward to take the glass, sipped from it and shuddered.

"Not your boy?" Carrie whispered.

Edith sighed. It seemed more than a sigh—a frightening sound, seeming to gather all the breath from her body, shudderingly expelling it.

"He isn't ill, is he?" Carrie asked, expecting worse—though Silcox, to be sure, had seemed controlled enough. And what had his dreadful laughter meant?

A Dedicated Man

Edith was silent for a moment and took a little more brandy. Then she said, in a forced and rather high-pitched voice: "He is much worse than ill. He is disgraced."

"Oh, my God!" said Carrie eagerly.

Edith's eyes rested for a second on the photograph lying beside her on the bed and then she covered it with her hand. "For theft," she said, her voice strengthening, "thieving," she added.

"Oh dear, I'm ever so sorry," Carrie said softly. "I can't believe it. I always said what an open face he'd got. Don't you remember—I always said that? Who could credit it? No one could. Not that I should breathe a word about it to a single soul."

"Mention it to whoever you like," Edith said. "The whole world will know, and may decide where they can lay the blame."

She drained the glass, her eyes closed. Then, "There's bad blood there," she said.

* * * * *

When Silcox had finished his duties, he returned but the door was locked from inside, and there was no answer when he spoke, saying her name several times in a low voice, his head bent close to the keyhole.

He went away and walked by the river in his waiter's clothes, stared at by all who passed him. When he returned to the hotel, he was stared at there, too. The kitchen porter seemed to be reassessing him, looked at him curiously and spoke insolently. The still-room maid pressed back against the passage wall as he went by. Others seemed to avoid him.

The bedroom door was still shut, but no longer locked. He stood looking at the empty room, the hairbrush had gone from the dressing-table and only a few coat-hangers swung from the rail in the clothes' cupboard. He picked up the brandy glass and was standing there sniffing it when Carrie Hurt, who had enjoyed her afternoon, appeared in the doorway.

"I don't know if you know, she's packed and gone," she said, "and had the taxi take her to the train. I thought the brandy would pull her together," she went on, looking at the glass in Silcox's hand. "I expect the shock unhinged her and she felt she had to go. Of

Elizabeth Taylor

course she'd want to see him, whatever happened. It must have been her first thought. I should like to say how sorry I am. You wouldn't wish such a thing on your worst enemy."

He looked at her in bewilderment and then, seeing her glance, as it swerved from his in embarrassment, suddenly checked by something out of his sight, he walked slowly round the bed and saw there what she was staring at—the waste-paper basket heaped high with her white knitting, all cut into little shreds; even the needles had been broken in two.

* * * * *

Before the new couple arrived, Silcox prepared to leave. Since Edith's departure, he had spoken to no one but his customers, to whom he was as stately as ever—almost devotional he seemed in his duties, bowed over chafing-dish or bottle—almost as if his calling were sacred and he felt himself worthy of it.

On the last morning, he emptied his bedroom cupboard and then the drawers, packing with his usual care. In the bottom drawer, beneath layers of shirts and rolled up in a damask napkin, he was horrified to discover a dozen silver-plated soup-spoons from the dining-room.

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THE HOGARTH PRESS

Biography—True and False¹

BY IRIS ORIGO

I DO not remember who it was who once remarked that every great man has his disciples, but it is always Judas who is the biographer.

Whether or not this is entirely true there are certainly more ways than one in which a biographer can betray his subject—and not all of them spring from bad intentions. 'Whatever you do, do not prettify me!' said Walt Whitman to his friend Horace Traubel, the author of *Walt Whitman in Camden*, 'Include all the hells and damns.' To 'prettify,' however, is not the only snare. It is perhaps still more important never to forget how very little any of us can know, or even guess, about anyone else. 'The world will never know my life,' said Carlyle, 'if it should write and read a hundred biographies of me. The main facts of it are known, and are likely to be known, to myself alone, of all created men.' And these words stand on the first page of his *Life* in three volumes, by his closest friend, Froude.

We would all agree as to which is the most satisfactory, as well as the greatest, biography—most satisfactory, owing to the unmistakable, unrelenting veracity of the biographer. Boswell has told us very clearly what he was aiming at: he thought that a *Life* should be 'like a flawless print struck off from the engraved plate which is bitten into our memory.' Biography, in his view, should not be a selection or a monument or a thesis, but the *duplication* of an image in the mind. Unfortunately, as Geoffrey Scott remarked in his penetrating Preface to Boswell's *Notes and Journals*, 'This is an aim beyond human reach.' But Scott also shrewdly added: 'The knowledge that his arrow pointed to that impossible mark was Boswell's source of confidence. Other biographies might forestall

¹ This essay originated as an Ann Radcliffe Lecture delivered at Radcliffe College, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

his book ; that they could rival it, he never, in his most sombre moments, conceived. Those others did not even know that biography is impossible.'

Impossible or not, it is a *genre* that has, for the reader, a perennial charm : it gratifies our wish to believe. When a biographer records—with a sharp ear and a selective eye—what a great man actually said to him, he awakes a degree of conviction denied to any other form of narrative or analysis. 'I wonder why we hate the past so,' says Howell ruminatively to Mark Twain, when his host has come up to his room in Hartford to see whether the water has frozen in his bath, and when Mark Twain replies, 'It's so damned humiliating !' we know, without a doubt, that that is precisely what the great man did say. From Lockhart's *Scott* and Froude's *Carlyle* to *The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table* and *Walt Whitman in Camden*, such books have a flavour richer than any other. It is like the aroma that used to greet one on entering an English country-house: a mixture of wood-smoke, old books, wet dogs and fresh roses. One entered, and one was at home.

This is, perhaps, why Dr. Johnson himself asserted that the biography of a contemporary was the only kind worth writing. 'Nobody,' he said, 'can write the life of a man but those who have eaten and drunk and lived in social intercourse with him.' Failing personal acquaintance, he maintained that a biographer must at least have been also to talk with his subject's friends—though he also admitted that their reports were often highly unsatisfactory. In his own youth, he related, he determined to write a *Life of Dryden*, and applied to two men who knew him, Sweeney and Cibber. 'Sweeney's information,' he said, 'was no more than this, that at Will's coffee-house Dryden had a particular chair for himself, which was set by the fire in winter and was called his winter chair : and that it was carried out for him to the balcony in summer, and was then called his summer chair.'

But what is the wretched biographer to do, who is not a contemporary?—the writer who has no 'plate bitten into his memory,' but must juggle, two or three centuries later, with bare facts and documents—with only sometimes, at best, the help of a portrait to look at. (And in any portrait, how much of the character is imparted

by the artist?) The farther back we go, the more evident our presumption becomes. From the seventeenth century onwards we have at least some private papers to help us—someone writes a love-letter—someone scolds an erring daughter—someone else sets down in a diary his fear of death—but earlier, what is there? A mass of public documents, but a great dearth of private ones. How can we dare, from such fragmentary and formal knowledge, to reconstruct a man?

Two methods are possible: the writer can attempt, in the manner of the three-volume Victorian biography and of the exhaustive modern Lives which are again becoming popular, to use everything he can discover; or he can attempt the selective portrait, the 'work of art.' The first method is that of the official biographer, writing at the request of the family or the state, or financed by some foundation. He works with one great advantage—a vast supply of material—and sometimes with a corresponding disadvantage, that part of it must be suppressed. For him the only solution seems to be the one recommended by William Allen White to a young historian: 'Kill the widow!'

Even distant relations, several generations later, can be distinctly hampering. Contessa Guiccioli's descendants, for fear of harming the reputation of 'poor dear Aunt Teresa', kept her letters from Byron under lock and key for over seventy years; the descendants of Lady Ashburton were for a long time reluctant to allow a glimpse of Carlyle's innocuous correspondence with her; and Boswell's papers lay for over a century in a trunk in Malahide Castle. Sometimes, too, it is the subject himself who takes a great many pains to cover his own tracks. In an essay on George Sand, Henry James suggested that the artist who fears to become the subject of a biography should take an unlimited degree of trouble to destroy all his private papers, leaving only his considered works behind him. 'Then,' he wrote, 'the cunning of the inquirer will exceed in subtlety and ferocity anything we today conceive, and the pale forewarned victim, with every track covered, every paper burnt and every letter unanswered, will, in the tower of art, stand, without a sally, the siege of years.' It is a fine challenge, and indeed we know that one day, in a roaring fire at Lamb House, Henry James did burn some of his letters, though certainly not all. But Professor Leon Edel, in his *Lectures on Literary*

Biography—True and False

Biography, tells a disconcerting little story which shows that it is not always so easy for the 'pale forewarned victim' to escape. It appears that, in a monograph on angina pectoris, the great English heart specialist, Sir James Mackenzie, referred to the case-history of a 'distinguished novelist' among his patients whom he congratulated on a short story in which two children were overcome by such terror of some invisible evil presences in a country-house that one of them died of fright. The doctor went on to relate that after examining his patient, who was apparently very anxious about the state of his heart, he said to him, 'You did not explain the nature of those mysterious presences'—whereupon the novelist explained that 'the principle of awakening a sense of mystery was to leave a horror undescribed.' Sir James tapped his patient's chest and said, 'It is the same with you; it is the mystery that is making you ill.' In his monograph, no name of course was mentioned, but several years after the novelist's death, an American doctor wrote to Sir James to ask whether his surmise as to the patient's identity was correct. 'You are quite right,' Sir James replied, 'the patient was Henry James and the story, *The Turn of the Screw*.' At the time Henry James told no-one of his fear of heart-disease, but here certainly is a case in which the tracks were uncovered in the end.

Most biographers of our own time, however—and certainly those dealing with public men—are more likely to complain of too much material than too little. Even Boswell, according to his diary, was so overwhelmed by the number of his notes, when he started to put them together, that he would sit in London coffee-houses with tears pouring down his cheeks; Virginia Woolf was hardly less dismayed by the number of Roger Fry's papers. And what must Franklin Roosevelt's biographer have felt, surveying the forty tons of documents at his disposal? We live in a historically-minded age, and I understand that a recent American statesman was even in the habit of having his telephone conversations recorded in large diaries.

Before such a plethora of material, even the most hardy biographer may well quail, especially if he ever realises how many different ways there are in which his own subject, looking back, may himself have seen his story. 'A biography of B. B.,' wrote Bernard Berenson only a few years before his death, 'could be written in many ways.

The most fetching would be of the Horatio Alger type, the immigrant Jew boy from Poland who rises to influence and eminence. Fabulously exciting could be the recounting of the transition he witnessed from an almost neolithic civilisation in Lithuania to the nuclear one of today. . . . The best and most rewarding account would be the story of his library, supplemented by the telling of how he acquired his works of art, how he started his house and garden, and a psychological account of his marriage, his friends, his enemies, his enemy-friends.' And this list does not even mention the aspect which to many would seem the most significant—the passionate sightseer and art-historian who was, in the words of one of his admirers, 'the most sensitive precision-instrument that has ever been applied to the study of Italian art.'

Every biography, then, whether it admits it or not, is based on a process of selection—and here at once new problems arise. Is it possible to choose without becoming biased, to reject without falsifying? Most writers are familiar with the seductive tricks of the trade; the slight juggling with dates, the suppression of inconvenient letters or of remarks that are out of character or merely flat—the placing of a telling conversation or document where it is most effective, the smoothing out and the touching up. In the end a portrait is built up: slick, vivid, convincing—and false.

There are also, of course, the mistakes of sheer ignorance. I am thinking at the moment of one of my own, which was kindly pointed out to me in a letter from Rebecca West. I had mentioned, as an example of Mrs. Carlyle's touchiness, the disastrous Christmas party at The Grange at which Lady Ashburton presented her, from the Christmas tree, with a silk dress, after which Jane retired to her bedroom in tears. I thought she had made a good deal of unnecessary fuss—or, rather, that she had used this pretext to express a deeper resentment against her hostess. Rebecca West, however, pointed out my mistake. Her grand-aunt Isabella Campbell, who belonged to the Carlyle period, had often spoken of the episode, and had considered it 'a most extraordinary thing for Lady Ashburton to have done, as a silk dress was the recognized present for a housekeeper, and a friend of the family would have felt bewildered at receiving it. To wear a dress which one had not ordered from the start and had fitted according

Biography—True and False

to one's own measures was a sign of social inferiority.' Plainly, therefore, on this occasion Jane was right to be offended, and I did not know what I was talking about. I still think, however, that Mrs. Carlyle was glad of so good an excuse to resent the behaviour of the woman whom her husband described as having 'the soul of a princess and a captainess,' and whom he considered, which was worse, as witty as herself.

One way of guarding oneself against making too many such mistakes, is to write only about those times and places with which one feels an instinctive affinity. Most of us have some natural habitat in the past, and the failure, for instance, of Strachey's *Elizabeth and Essex* is probably due to the fact that he had strayed too far from his. In literature as in life, it is not profitable to force one's affections. Just as, in a conversation, there is sometimes an undercurrent of feeling, a secondary silent conversation, going on, in which the real exchange of feelings takes place, so in writing there should be a rich background of unstated knowledge, a tapestry that is never unrolled. We must know more, a great deal more, than what we tell. Two biographies, though extremely dissimilar, occur to me as instances: David Cecil's *Lord M.* and Sandburg's *Abraham Lincoln*. Both are good books, because both writers were well acquainted, long before they began to write, with the worlds that they describe: that of the families of 'the Great Whiggery,' and that of the prairies of Knox County in Illinois. No amount of painstaking research can take the place of the sixth sense granted, even after a long lapse of time, to writers who have been at home in precisely the same world as their subject; it is only they who can distinguish a phrase subsequently invented from one really spoken, a likely gesture from an unlikely one. They know, long before being told, how their subject moved, spoke, ate; what their neighbours spoke about, and what they saw, on looking out of the window in the morning.

In this, indeed, the biographer somewhat resembles the translator, for a translation, too, is only possible where one is entirely familiar with the setting. I remember, for instance, once reading a rendering of Leopardi's *Sabato del Villaggio* in which the '*fascio d'erba*,' the bundle of grass, which the girl in the poem is carrying, is translated as 'a truss of hay.' The image brought to mind is one of green hayfields

Iris Origo

and waggons and pitchforks and buxom country girls—an Austrian scene or an English. But there are no hayfields near Recanati. There are only steep, dun-coloured hills on which olive-trees grow, with wheat beneath them and perhaps a few vines, and by the edge of the road there are sometimes tufts of grass, of which town-dwellers cut an armful, to feed their rabbits. This was the bundle of grass brought home by Leopardi's '*donzelletta*.' A single misleading sentence—written not because the translator did not know Italian, but because he did not know Leopardi's birthplace—conjured up a whole non-existent world.

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Three insidious temptations assail the biographer : to suppress, to invent, and to sit in judgement—and of these the earliest and most frequent is suppression. In the Middle Ages, indeed, it was rendered inevitable by the purpose which biography was intended to fulfil—to produce a noble example. The medieval view of history was that of a drama enacted within an established pattern—God's pattern for mankind. The lives of the men who came nearest to conforming with this pattern were related as an example to other, lesser men—and consequently a disproportionate number of early medieval biographies were concerned with the lives of Saints, while others were about rulers or leaders rather larger than life-size. There was little attempt at psychological interpretation ; the emphasis was on the saint's virtues or the prince's exploits. All that was unedifying was omitted.

The first English author who admitted that a biography might also aim at what he calls 'lawful delight' was Fuller, who in his Introduction to his *Worthies* (in 1662) placed this as the fourth and last of his purposes in writing : 'First, to gain some glory to God. Secondly, to preserve the manœuvres of the Devil. Thirdly, to present examples to the living.' And only fourthly, 'to entertain the Reader with Delight.'

In this respect, the attitude of classical biography was much nearer to our own. It was by the example of Plutarch that writers justified themselves when taste began to turn, in the seventeenth century, from what Dr. Johnson later called 'honeysuckle lives,' to a more varied, livelier curiosity. Dryden, for instance, admired Plutarch

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precisely because he had dared to show his heroes in undress. 'You may behold,' he said, 'Scipio and Laelius gathering cockle-shells on the shore, Augustus playing at bounding-stones, and Agesilaus riding on a hobby-horse among his children. The pageantry of life is taken away: you see the poor reasonable animal as naked as ever nature made him; are acquainted with his passions and his follies, and find the demi-god, a man.'

Here, surely, is the prelude to modern biography—but with the admission that heroes, too, might be shown as naked and fallible, the problem arose as to whether this true picture was likely to dismay or to corrupt the reader. If this danger existed, had the biographer the right to speak the truth?

Pascal maintained that the real danger of describing a hero's vices as well as his virtues was that it would always be the former that would be imitated. 'The example,' he said, 'of Alexander's chastity has produced fewer continent men, than those whom his drunkenness has rendered intemperant. It is not shameful to be less virtuous than he—and it seems to be no more vicious.'

The same problem was also set by Boswell to Dr. Johnson. Was it right to relate that Addison, having lent a hundred pounds to Steele, recovered his loan by sending an officer to remove his friend's furniture? Dr. Johnson charitably suggested that perhaps Addison had done this with the intention of reforming Steele, but he also maintained that, whatever the interpretation, the facts should be told. 'Of such speculations,' he said, 'there is no end; we cannot see into the hearts of men, but their actions are open to observation.' And he added that another reason for telling the whole truth was that 'if nothing but the bright side of characters should be shown, we should sit in despondency and think it utterly impossible to imitate them in *anything*.' He believed, in short, in telling the unadorned truth for a highly characteristic reason: 'It keeps mankind from despair.'

In the nineteenth century, however, the suppression of unedifying or inconvenient facts came into favour again—partly owing to Victorian reticence and prudery and partly to the same taste which created the Albert Memorial. 'Too long and too idolatrous!' was the comment of Leslie Stephen on one of the great three-volume

Victorian Lives, and 'How delicate,' exclaimed Carlyle, 'how decent is English biography, bless its mealy mouth!'

One of the most interesting examples of deliberate suppression appears in what, nevertheless, is still one of the great biographies in the English language, Mrs. Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë*. Mrs. Gaskell, who was herself a friend of Charlotte's (though not an intimate one) knew precisely what she intended to do. 'I weighed every line,' she wrote, 'with my whole power and heart, so that every line should go to its great purpose of making her known and valued as one who had gone through such a terrible life with a brave and faithful heart.' In order, however, to achieve this admirable purpose, she did not hesitate to suppress, in Charlotte's letters, whatever revealed the intolerant, governessy element in her character, or the wild strain of passion in her youthful feelings for Ellen Nussey, in which her devotion to her friend was intensified by their shared religious aspirations. 'I am trembling all over with excitement,' wrote Charlotte, 'after reading your note: . . . I have glimpses of Holy, inexpressible things.' And in another letter she played with the idea of living alone with Ellen in a cottage, 'where we could live and love until Death.'

These are the banked-down fires which burst into flame when Charlotte fell in love with the head of her school in Brussels, Constantin Héger—a Catholic and a married man. Without such passion we should not have had *Villette* or *Jane Eyre*. But four of Charlotte's letters to M. Héger—though Mrs. Gaskell undoubtedly saw them—were suppressed. 'Your last letter,' Charlotte wrote to him, 'was stay and prop to me for half a year. When day by day I await a letter and when day by day disappointment comes . . . the fever takes me—I lose appetite and sleep and pine away.' But never does Mrs. Gaskell's *Life* suggest that M. Héger was anything more to Charlotte than a kind and stimulating teacher, nor that her increasing estrangement from Madame Héger was caused by anything but 'the English Protestant's dislike of Romanism'. And yet, nearly half a century after the publication of her book, Mrs. Gaskell wrote to a friend, 'I did so long to tell the truth, and I believe *now* that I hit as near to the truth as anyone *could*.' And she added, 'One comfort is that God knows the truth.' The strange thing is that, even now

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that we are aware of her suppressions and inexactitudes, we still feel that it *was* the truth that Mrs. Gaskell was seeking, and that her book comes nearer to the heart of the matter than the later works which show up its deficiencies.

There is, however, an even more serious temptation for the biographer than suppression, and that is sheer invention. An excellent instance is the one quoted by Professor Trevor Roper in a somewhat merciless attack on Lytton Strachey: the length of Dr. Arnold's legs. Strachey had formed a very clear image of Dr. Arnold in his mind: he saw him as a noble, pompous figure, and—to introduce just the right additional touch of absurdity, of debunking—it was necessary that his legs should have been too short. Unfortunately, however, as Strachey himself once admitted to a friend, there is absolutely no evidence to show that Dr. Arnold's legs were shorter in proportion to his body than any other man's.

Now the danger of this kind of invention is that, once discovered, it shakes our capacity to believe anything that its inventor has said. 'Suppose we believe one half of what he tells,' suggested Lord Mansfield to Dr. Johnson, about an acquaintance whose stories, he said, 'we unhappily found to be very fabulous.' 'Yes,' Dr. Johnson replied, 'but we don't know *which* half to believe. By his lying we lose not only our reverence for him, but all comfort in his conversation.'

In the case of Lytton Strachey, we lose a good deal by losing this comfortable sense of faith. If Dr. Arnold's legs were not short, we say to ourselves, perhaps other diverting details were also false. Perhaps General Gordon did not retire into his tent with a Bible and a brandy bottle? (This indeed was a distortion of a passage in Chaillé-Long's *Memoirs*: Gordon merely took his prayer-book with him.) Perhaps Florence Nightingale did not, in childhood, put her dog's broken paw into a splint? Yet if, owing to our irritation about all this, we were not to read Strachey's *Queen Victoria*, we should miss a very good book.

Strachey himself stated that a biographer's equipment consists in three qualities—'a capacity for absorbing facts, a capacity for stating them, and a point of view.' The definition is a good one, for without a point of view no history can be written—but there is also a danger that it may not only shape, but distort the facts. The biographer

who puts his wit above his subject will end by writing about one person only—himself. My personal complaint about *Eminent Victorians* would not be that it is inaccurate, but that it is thin, and that its thinness springs from condescension. If you wish to see a person, you must not start by seeing *through* him. Another instance of this occurs in the first sentence of a most interesting and conscientious biography—Harold Nicholson's *Tennyson*. 'We smile today at our Victorians,' it begins, 'not confidently, as of old, but with a shade of hesitation: a note of perplexity, a note of anger, sometimes a note of wistfulness, has come to mingle with our laughter.'

The fatal words are, of course, the first ones: 'We smile today.' The biographer has started by putting up a barrier—and even if, in the next few words, he suggests that it is beginning to crumble, he is still writing from the other side. He has, in short, succumbed to yet another of the biographer's temptations: the desire to sit in judgement. 'To penetrate,' wrote the great French historian, Marc Bloch, 'into the unknown being of a man separated from us by a long stretch of generations, one must almost cast off one's own self. To tell him what one thinks of him, one need only remain oneself. The effort is undeniably less strenuous.'

Every work of art, of course, implies a previous process of assessment, and the judgement of character still remains the central problem of biography. But in so far as a biographer is also a historian, he should, I think, be very careful not to drown his subject's voice with his own. One peculiar function of biography is to show history as it was to the participant, to observe, for a moment, *das Gewordene als Werdendes*—what has come to pass, while it is occurring. Through the individual peephole of the man whose life we are describing, we can see history in the course of being lived. In one sense, all organised histories are unsatisfactory, because they are written with what in Italy is called *il senno del poi*, the wisdom of the future. But in individual lives we can seize, if nothing else, a most vivid sense of actuality: it is a pity to blur it.

Besides, our own judgements are surely not immune from change. We will not, at the age of fifty, judge a man in the same way as we would have done at twenty-five. Ten days before his death, Dr. Johnson asserted that he was 'ready now to call a man a *good* man,

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on much easier terms than formerly.' With the passing of the years, the muscles of moral indignation sometimes begin to sag, the voice diminishes its harshness, and this is true even in the field of abstract thought. I remember asking Mr. Santayana, in his old age—when he was preparing an abridged edition of the great work of his youth, *The Life of Reason*—whether there were many things that he would now like to change. 'No,' he gently replied, 'I feel I have much the same things to say—but I wish to say them in a different tone of voice.'

Recently the psychologists have invented some ingenious devices which, they claim, will provide short cuts to assessing a man's character and state of mind. A German called Busemann advises us to count, in a man's letters or journals, the relative number of adjectives and of active verbs, thus obtaining what he calls his A/Q or Action Quotient. A prevalence of adjectives, he says, indicates a state of emotional tension—and the process has even been applied to William James' letters, showing that between the ages of forty and fifty the letters he wrote to women were more emotional, and after sixty, those addressed to men. Two American psychologists have also invented a complicated device, which they have so far confined to interviews with people in a state of emotional stress. By counting, in the reports of these interviews, the words expressing some forms of discomfort or tension, which they call D, and those expressing relief, which they call R, they obtain what they call a D.R. Quotient, which, when set down on a graph, accurately reflects their client's state of mind at the time. They therefore suggest that the same method should be applied by biographers. What, for instance, was Churchill's Discomfort Relief Quotient, when he offered the British nation, 'blood, sweat and tears'?

I am myself not very good at counting, but in any case I do not think that either A/Q or D R/Q are going to take us much farther in the complicated task of assessing human personality. They will hardly take the place of those unscientific uncertain instruments: intelligence and intuition. But how often even these fail us! We can hang mirrors, as Virginia Woolf advised, at every corner—we can look at our subject's face at every angle and in every light. We can discover strange and curious pieces of information: that Dr.

Johnson liked to carry orange-peel in his pocket, that Aristotle had a hot-water bottle made of leather, filled with hot oil, and that Leopardi, in the winter in Bologna, spent his days in a bag lined with feathers, from which he emerged looking like Papageno. But never, never do we see enough. 'In every fat man,' said Cyril Connolly, 'there is a thin man crying to get out.' How often are we aware of him? There is surely no better evidence of a biographer's sensitivity than his willingness to remind himself constantly of all that he cannot see. Here is Howell's description of Mark Twain in his old age: 'He was apt to smile into your face with a subtle but amiable perception, and yet with a sort of remote absence: you were all there for him, but *he was not all there for you.*'

For when, indeed—except perhaps for brief moments between lovers—is the whole of another human being ever there for us? To Virginia Woolf the central problem of biography was how to weld 'into one seamless whole' the 'granite-like solidity' of truth and 'the rainbow-like intangibility' of personality. It is, surely, impossible—but few writers have come closer to it than she did. The problem was one that fascinated her—not only in literature, but in life. 'Go on, this is enthralling,' she would say, when her friends brought her an exciting piece of gossip. 'I feel as if a buried statue were being dug up piece by piece.' One of her friends once told me that, on a cold November evening, as he was making his way to her house, he came upon Virginia Woolf standing in the fog beside an apple-barrow, and asking the old apple-woman, in her deep, throaty, compelling voice: 'Tell me, what does it *feel* like to stand here in the fog on a dark evening selling apples?' I cannot vouch for the truth of this story, but certainly the question was one she often asked. 'What does it feel like,' she would say to me, 'to wake up in the morning on a Tuscan farm?' And once I heard her say, perhaps not wholly without malice, to a disconcerted young peer: 'Tell me, what does it feel like to be a lord?'

Yet when, in her later years, she came to write a Life of Roger Fry, who had been one of her closest friends, the book was curiously less vivid, more conventional, than the etchings in her essays. She found, indeed, the sheer effort of putting together the material for a full biography almost unbearably tedious. 'Donkey work,' she

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recorded in *A Writer's Diary*, 'sober drudgery, appalling grind.' And when at last the book was finished, there was a most revealing final note: 'What a curious relation is mine with Roger at this moment—I who have given him a kind of shape after his death. Was he like that? I feel very much in his presence at the moment, as if I were intimately connected with him: as if we together had given birth to this vision of him; a child born of us. Yet he had no power to alter it. And yet for some years it will represent him.'

* * * * *

Is biography, then, worth attempting at all? Where there are so many snares, would we do better to be silent? I think not. Many critics would deny to any biographical portrait the essential reality, the truth that is truer than truth, of the novelist's or dramatist's characters. Virginia Woolf herself did so, and more recently Olivia Manning, in an article on the future of the novel, has compared what she calls the flatness of Strachey's Queen Victoria with the rounded portrait of Madame Bovary. She scornfully attributes the present popularity of biography to 'a middlebrow snobbishness'—an extension of the prejudice against novels which already existed in Jane Austen's time—and considers its appeal to lie in precisely the limitations that it places on the writer's imagination.

I do not think that this is necessarily true. The biographer has, of course, a fixed pattern: he is, as Desmond MacCarthy once said, 'an artist upon oath.' But the calls upon his imagination and intuition are hardly less exacting. The novelist and dramatist, after all, do not create their characters in a void, but out of their experience or intuition. Shakespeare himself invented hardly any of his plots, but—having accepted a ready-made pattern for his characters' actions—was then free to give his whole attention to bringing them to life. And so surely, too, the biographer's true function—the transmission of personality—may also be, without its own pattern, an act of creation—giving shape, in Virginia Woolf's phrase, to a man after his death, and endowing him with what is, when we come to think of it, a very odd form of immortality. For of many great men of the past we know *only* what their biographers or portrait-painters saw. Just as we know no other face for Pope Julius II than Raphael's, no other

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Federico di Montefeltro than Piero della Francesca's, Strachey's Queen Victoria will probably become for most people the only Queen Victoria; it is Boswell's Johnson whom we call Dr. Johnson.

It is of course possible to wonder whether in the near future there will be any demand for biography at all. Reading is a private pleasure, and not only is the desire for privacy disappearing from a world of ready-made designs for living, but people's curiosity about other people's lives can now be satisfied in more dramatic ways than any book can offer: every housewife in America was able to watch from her kitchen Alger Hiss on trial for treason. The radio and television enable every man to interpret for himself, without the filter of another man's mind, the character and actions of his contemporaries—while in schools the figures of the past will more and more be shown, thanks to historical films, in a form which places no strain on either the intellect or the imagination.

But I do not really believe in these substitutes. The story of public exploits may become, to some extent, the field of the radio and of T.V., but the slow development of character, the processes of thought of the writer and artist, and above all, the relation of human beings to each other—these are things that fortunately cannot be simplified, and that will always have to be set down, however imperfectly, in words.

'The true history of the human race,' wrote E. M. Forster in a recent article, 'is the story of human affections. In comparison with it all other histories—even economic history—are false.' He goes on to say that, owing to its reticent nature, it can never be written down completely, and this of course is true. Yet what little we do know of this aspect of history has come to us through biography or autobiography—what men have told us of themselves, or what others have set down about them.

The biographer who works with this material is dealing with what is both most complicated and most simple, most intense and yet most intermittent—the human heart. Every individual life is also the story of Everyman, and while it is the biographer's business to describe the passions, foibles and idiosyncrasies which make his subject a *person*, his work will be very thin if these individual traits are not also seen as part of a universal drama. 'A man's life of any worth,'

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said Keats, 'is a continual allegory, and very few eyes can see the Mystery.'

Personally I do not think of truth as being made of granite, but rather as a note in music—a note which we instantly recognise as the right one, as soon as it is struck. Proust, who cultivated the art of memory as perhaps no-one else has ever done, describes in a famous passage in *Du côté de chez Swann* how in later life he was sometimes able to hear again certain sounds which, he wrote, 'in reality had never stopped'; the sobs which has shaken him at a certain crucial moment of his childhood. 'It is only because life is now growing silent about me,' he wrote, 'that I hear them afresh, like convent bells which one might believe were not rung nowadays, because during the day they are drowned by the city hubbub, but which may be heard clearly enough in the stillness of the evening.'

The biographer who has acquired a similar sensitiveness to the continuity of emotion may realise at certain moments, when life is silent about him, that he has become aware of something about his subject for which he could not give chapter and verse, but which he knows to be true. For all genuine emotion leaves behind it an eternal reverberation. Whether it is always possible to hear or to reproduce it, is another matter, unless a writer has at his disposal such material as Keats' *Letters*—and even then, even then . . . But certainly even the faintest echo can only be heard by temporarily casting aside, as Bloch advised, one's own self and one's own opinions. For this reason I would say to the young biographer, who has upon his desk his first, intriguing file of papers, to examine them, if he can, with an almost blank mind: to let them produce their own effect. Later on, the time will come to compare, to sift and to draw conclusions; but first he should listen without interrupting. Sometimes then, as he deciphers the faded ink, a phrase will stand out which reveals the hand that wrote it. He may see, as suddenly as, at the turn of a passage, one comes upon one's own image in a mirror, a living face. Then, in this fleeting moment, he may perhaps reach a faint apprehension—as near to the truth as we are ever likely to get—of what another man was like.

The Lorelei of the Roads

BY WILLIAM SANSOM

'GARDEN disappears? I don't quite—'

'Gardens are always disappearing, yet still too seldom for their disappearance to seem usual. The other day, imagine it, there was this family sitting in their trim suburban front parlour, and "trim" is exact—looking out on to their front lawn, with its clipped box-hedge, its white posts and prettified chains, its sundial and crazy paving and gnomes and its exact mown grass. Houses across the road, asleep in the warm spring afternoon. A cherry tree in bloom—also trim. Away in the blue sky the echo of an aeroplane, just enough of a far noise of effort to make the quiet properly perceptible. And what happens—as the little family gaze on their contented garden?'

'Well?'

'It disappears. It does not even give a lurch. It just falls downwards. All garden gone. In garden's place, big ugly earthy hole. Garden gone into ancient dried-up river conduit unknown underneath. See?'

'Ha ha.'

'Ha ha to you. You don't read your papers properly. What about the man who woke up with a strange car in his bedroom—not that he always slept with a car in his bedroom, not he—but there it was, he awoke from a deep sleep on his ground-floor bedroom to find the smiling face of a chromium-fanged family saloon where the chest o' drawers should have been. "I thought I was dreaming," the man said. *That* is the point. For a few seconds, the man really found it reasonable, if strange, to be lying with a car in his bedroom. Only later did he see the broken bow window, the blood of its occupant.'

'I see roughly what you mean. But really—this affair of Patterson and the woman, and the Alsatian, and the dead child—'

'And the paraffin can. It all happened.'

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'But I don't want to read about such odd and mad things. I'd rather look for magic in the ordinary.'

'Mad things they may seem—but were they? And were they even so unusual? Add up the amount of these strange-looking little news items in the papers in one week. You'll be astounded at how many there are. They're happening all the time. It may be your turn next.'

'All right, go over it again then. Only remember one thing—Patterson *was* mad. You can't deny that.'

'But at what point did he become mad? When did passion become obsession?'

'All right, all right. Tell.'

'I've been to the street corner where it happened. It was—'

'The corner of the by-pass? No, begin at the—'

'Yes, the beginning, the street corner where it all began. That was a corner, too—a very usual kind of suburban London corner. Traffic lights, a coloured-looking tobacconist's, a dry-cleaner's, smeared tarmac where the tram-lines had been, new paving stones too white against the old kerb and the dirty brown brick; tall yellow fog-lighting above, an occasional trolley-bus, an Anglo-Italian café and the opening of the alley where Patterson lived. The pub, a terrible affair with tartan walls, stood about fifty yards back along the main road. Patterson had been out to buy paraffin and had dropped in there only ten minutes before it happened. He had noticed the motorist. The motorist was certainly not drunk, though he might have taken enough to be capable of many a minor driving error. It never came out. Anyway, the whole confusion, the death and the burning, might have sobered him right up. And you don't go round smelling people's breaths with a half-ton of car and oil and petrol up in flames.'

'But Patterson knew the man had been drinking. And when he'd had his half-pint of beer himself he strolled back in the light summer evening to the corner, still carrying this can of paraffin he'd bought half an hour before—back to the corner where his little boy came running out of the alley to him.'

'Then he did what he shouldn't have done. He sent the boy across the road to the fish shop for a bob's-worth. Told him to watch the traffic lights, keep to the zebra.'

'He waited on the corner, in the lazy warm air, with the neon lights smoothing the street—and I should think the whole feeling of those few minutes was one of peace and security, even of dullness, since there was not much traffic and most of the shops were shut. Then, of course, the boy came running back across the empty road, starting off when the lights were red, not seeing the change to yellow, and not keeping to the zebra since there was at that moment no traffic—except for Deane's car which was just accelerating away from the pub and slap-happy for a free road ahead.

'The boy was small, Deane must have had his eye raised at the yellow light he was risking, and that was how with everybody in the wrong he clipped the child's head with his mudguard and dragged him under and along the road for a good thirty feet before he jammed to a stop.

'As always happens, people appeared from nowhere. In a few seconds they'd freed the child. He was dead. They laid him out on the pavement and Deane stood there white and shaking and saying nothing while everybody talked at once to him and someone went calling along the street for a policeman.

'This had all happened close in front of Patterson's eyes. He was shocked slow, like a sleep-walker—then went blind crazy. One moment he was kneeling at the boy's side, and the next he was over the bonnet of the car sluicing it with paraffin, in through the little open window slit, all over out and in, and so quickly no one got their wits together to stop him—they were all gathered round the kid anyway—before he'd struck a match and sent the whole lot blazing up. It went up like a bomb. One moment a car, the next a cage of fire.

'But even then he stayed there waving his arms at it, with the flames singeing his face. Then everyone was moving, picking up the child, dragging Patterson off, all getting well clear before the tanks blew.

'Deane woke up at last. He suddenly began shouting: "You bloody fool, you bloody fool!" only that—and he struggled to get back to his car. They held him back, and in a few more seconds with the flames thrashing and blowing high as the trolley-wires even he could see that no one could get near the crackling black web of metal. He just quietened and turned to Patterson.

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"You don't know—" he said.

'But he never finished his sentence. Because Patterson stood staring him in the eyes, so silent and so still he looked, and one arm pointing down at the child's body huddled up in coats, a drab little bundle on the whitish stone pavement.

'The accusation was final. No one could have said anything to that.

'Then the police and the ambulance came, and the whole business of taking particulars began, everyone offering evidence and as much talk as a Latin crowd, only surly and ferocious, self-righteous and with undertones of fearful fairness, no Latin joy . . . you can imagine it.

'Patterson, by the way, is a brown-eyed, black-haired, rather wan middle-weight man of thirty or so, by trade an electrician. Certainly nothing ostensibly mad about him—only perhaps his eyes are a shade too soft, brown and big, soft like an animal's: and he had the reputation of being a quiet man, too quiet, and with one or two lonely obsessions, like a love of storms, in which he would stand out drenched for hours, sometimes alone at night in the street. It was his only child. And then Deane—he's a bachelor, no children, and that puts him in a different camp to the child-bearer's, he's a fat young business man with a red healthy face, hair with a curl in it, neck bulging at the back of his collar—together with a touch too many of the good things of life, too blessed and bouncy and the natural envy, one might suppose, of a chap like pale-faced Patterson.

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'It was some months later, long after the court hearing and so on—where it was never proved that Deane had had a drink or two—that Patterson turned up one evening at Deane's house with the cellophane flower-box.

'Deane told me his stomach sank as at any other remembered guilt. He stood there speechless looking at this brown-eyed chap on the doorstep who also stood looking at him in silence, and with the big cellophane flower-box in his arms. It had a broad ribbon tied cross-ways round it. That might possibly have been a terrible irony on Patterson's part—seeing what was inside the box—but it was more probably simply the best available means of securing the lid. But

Deane didn't at once see what was inside, and simply said : " Flowers ? For me ? "

" " You sent 'em for my little boy's funeral," Patterson said. " I'd like to come in. "

' Deane stammered his " of course " and then they were standing together in the sitting room and Patterson was saying calmly, " Didn't know me, then ? Forget quick, etc.? Well you're not going to forget, not for one day for the rest of your life, and I've brought something here to remind you.

" " You killed my boy," he went on, " you killed my little boy and you got away with it, like the rest of you, and you'll go on driving about how you like, drinking and driving about and risking other people's lives as if nothing had happened ever. But it has, it *has*, and you're not going to forget this time . . . "

' He had begun to shake at his own words. Deane—he was honest enough to tell me—only felt selfishly uneasy, he saw that he had here someone a bit touched, and how was he going to get rid of him ? But he was also in the company of death : and privately he felt himself very much in the wrong—in spite of a terrible complication that was largely passed over in the court and of which finally he was now to talk. At all events, he did not feel he could argue in the face of this man whose child he had killed, accidentally or not.

' Standing there in the cold little well-to-do room with its pale colours, dustless and ivory still, he only murmured : " Yes, yes, Mr. Patterson—you don't know how much I sympathise with you . . . don't upset yourself the more . . . "

" " Don't upset myself ? " Patterson flared. " Of course I'll bloody well upset myself ! And you'll be upset too. I'll see you're upset—you just take this box and you keep it in a place you can see it, don't tuck it away in no drawers, you look at this box every day . . . otherwise, I'll not answer for the—"

' Deane only thought of agreeing—although he was beginning to feel angry, as anyone sworn at may do.

' Anyhow he now took the flower-box and for the first time looked at what was inside. The big blue ribbon still barred broadly across the transparency : it only looked as if there was a jumble of old clothes inside. He looked back at Patterson. " I don't see," he said.

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"You'll see," Patterson said, "when I get this thing off."

'He tore off the ribbon, and then what was in the long, flat, square-cornered cellophane box became startlingly clear. "They're his little things," Patterson said, and there inside, pinned in a pattern like butterflies in a show case, lay a pair of child's grey socks, a red school cap, a battered yellow cricket bat, a green and grey belt with a snaky tin S-fastener . . . made up in their forlorn little pattern in that glassy box they looked neglected and forgotten, like clothes in a museum case.

'An everyday thought quickly passed across Deane's mind—how awful they would look in his careful cool room, reticent and afraid of itself, terrified of showing off. It would be as bad as a glass dome full of wax fruit . . . but he quickly put such thoughts away and looked down helplessly sad at the little pinned objects.

"Here?" Patterson said.

"Really, now, old man, we'll have to see," Deane murmured, and then his voice rose on a quick note of impatience, "You honestly can't *expect*—"

'Patterson calmed down instantly. He might even have responded to the authority of Deane's class, normally to be obliged. But in any case he lowered his voice and now appealed to Deane, coaxing and quiet, as if they had long been friends: "I know you'll want to keep his things for me. They'll remind you of him, you wouldn't want to forget him, would you?"

'Deane had passed on from his first shock. He began to feel a true sympathy with this father and also, grotesque as it first seemed, with this idea of his. In fact it was not at all grotesque, it was simple if unusual common sense, and his mind flicked on to the possibility of everybody doing this same thing, setting up private memorials in the homes of the guilty . . . most would be hidden away in cupboards, but once every so often they would see the light—and would anyone *throw away* such an accusing small memento? Would it not become invested with a superstition stronger than the hand that tried to remove it?

'But something else was worrying Deane at the same time. Suddenly he said, "You shouldn't have done it!"

'They stood looking at each other for some seconds, the box

between them. Patterson could not see what Deane meant, and Deane seemed to be thinking of something else, he was looking away to the corner of the room.

"You shouldn't have burned my car!" Deane said suddenly loud.

"Not burned your——?"

"No!"

"Not burned your *car*?" Patterson said, unbelieving, and his lips moving with the taste of something bad in his mouth.

"Violence is never right," Deane said.

"You talk about your *car* . . ."

"Now I'm going to remind *you* of something," Deane quietly said, and he went over to the bureau in the corner of the room and picked up a leather-framed photograph. "You'll have forgotten, too, I suppose, though she was mentioned in Court . . ."

The photograph showed a large Alsatian dog—a bitch, mild and motherly, its flesh rolled fat under rich fur and the face looking straight into the camera's eye. Two black eye markings like eyebrows gave it a grave human expression of enquiry. The mouth was panting, like laughter.

Deane said, "Have you forgotten she was down in the back of the car when you burnt it?"

It was an intolerable moment, they were both impassioned as much as anything by considerations of fair play, feelings that flared so fiercely in slow English blood—yet here were the scales of justice hanging lopsided, a dog against a child, plainly not equivalents but each with an ineradicable argument . . . and in the end it seems that the box was left there in the room and Patterson, who had the photograph for a moment in his hands, never gave it back, simply took it with him, not putting it in his pocket, but holding it a little away from him, as one carries something wet.

* * * * *

It's not quite clear when the episode of the by-pass began—although there's a date, of course, for the time when Patterson went to live in the odd little lodge-house on the corner where the by-pass runs.

We knew when he left his wife. It was two months after the

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boy's funeral, roughly about the time he turned up at Deane's with the box. It was probably the child who had kept them together, and when it was gone, nothing held them. You might have thought that the memory of the child, and their grief, would have knitted them the closer—it could happen either way. Patterson's way was to make off. He left London and set up a couple of hundred miles out, in this lonely Swiss-eaved, Victorian lodge, the isolated remnant of some ploughed-up old estate. The village lay a good mile back on a secondary road.

'He used a bicycle to get about, and got enough work—though whenever possible he walked it, off the roads, for he had already developed this phobia for roads; but as usual the phobia was made up as much of love as hate, for he'd chosen to live by the by-pass; and, though this might have been coincidental, on a corner.

'The local people quickly noticed something odd about him and as quickly passed it over—eccentricity growing wild as weeds in the country. He used to mumble at cars. Cars were his obsession. When he went into the square little pub, and there was a car or two parked in the yard, he would loose off a muttering jet of foul language as he passed by them. But he never touched one. And when the locals joked at him about it, for out there they had no sensitive feelings about leaving the dotty alone, they would rather provoke him, much in the same way as children will toss a stone at a cripple, hardly in malice, simply with a rough view of doing something to somebody—when they did this, he would slyly play up to them and theorise about the general curse of the petrol engine, how it had ruined mankind, speed and smell and all that. "Look at them!" he'd say. "Even when they're not whooshing at you full pelt they're creeping up behind, or what's just as bad, just standing about everywhere, taking up all the room, so's you can't see nothing but them big tin beetles."

'So he'd go on. And go about his electrical work, do his bit of shopping, and sometimes drop into the 'Share for a beer—and for the rest keep himself to himself at home. He'd always be home by dark. On a light summer's evening you'd see him out quite late with his case full of bits of plugs and wire—but he was always homeward bound as the sun went down.

'It was always after dark that the accidents on the corner happened.

'No attention was paid at first. It is a principle of Safety First that you've got to have a few accidents before precautions are applied. And even then, after they'd sent observers along to watch the conduct of the road, it was some time before somebody noticed that every smash-up occurred after dark. There were not, of course, all that amount of accidents—but just enough, on the average, to worry them.

'There are a number of unexplained mysteries of the road. Where is it—somewhere on the Portsmouth road?—that so many windshields are without warning, at night or in daylight, suddenly shattered? No one's ever found out why. No one's found a pellet or a bullet or anything near—it's been going on for years. It can only be some strange wind or vibration or—but nobody knows.

'The trouble at Patterson's corner went on for a long time too. They put up any number of *Slow* and *Danger* signs, and scribbled themselves silly with white lines all over the road. As it turned out, these measures tended to increase the trouble.

'A rumour grew. That here the Sirens sang again—and I don't mean police sirens, we don't have them anyway. No, it was because a man who'd been knocked unconscious came to saying: "She called, she called at me . . ." And another had mumbled about a woman, a beautiful woman—and then, on some private second thought, shut up about it. These two reports came from an intendant in the Cottage Hospital; but they might well have been ordinary delirious mutterings, and that was how anyone with any sense took it. Yet, as mud will stick, or as people simply like something to talk about, the rumour persisted; in fact it grew, and grew into a superstition—however mechanised we may think we are, the country remains a pretty creepy old place full of rot and growth and the years, the years; it may be patched with pylons and garages and televisions, but it is still green, there are dark groves and lonely hills and at night especially you feel that in the great, growing, damp, dark stillness something very long ago might happen. I can well imagine how Patterson's whole affair, though now explained, may still develop into a ghostly legend, a Woman in White, in years to come.

'To support the rumour—even to support it by disproving it, again as mud sticks—was the affair of "Patterson's woman." The

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suspicion that Patterson kept a woman in his house blew up, blew down, blew up again and blew down into a kind of uneasiness. Because, although he lived on that open corner away from the village, and the village itself turned any eyes it had after dark in the opposite direction, where the buses ran and the nearest small town and station lay—nevertheless there was an occasional local who passed that way after dark. And came the night when one old fellow was cycling past and swore he'd seen a golden-haired woman in her birthday suit hanging out of the window. He reported this in the pub the next day, it went all round the village and Patterson received a number of nudges from the men and outraged backs from the women. Patterson only laughed and said the old fellow had taken more than was good for him.

'For a few days after that a number of the villagers kept bumping into each other in the dark outside Patterson's house. But nobody saw anything. The affair died down. Until a few months later a much younger fellow said he'd seen a woman at the window, just the same, golden-haired and naked, and being a brash young man he'd stopped to watch and the woman, he said, began to wave when a car passed. Though it must have been the wrong car, he said, for it only swerved and went straight on. He stayed on, saw the woman reappear from behind the curtains each time a headlight showed along the road, and then wave at the car as it passed. It was pretty late, and there wasn't a car more than every ten minutes . . . he saw her wave at four cars in all, and then she had finally drawn the curtains and put the light out.

'When this got to Patterson's ear he went very grim. He went straight to the young man. "So you waited all that time, did you?" he said. "Watching my wife?"

'This sobered them up. They all thought they had been on to a nice scandal, but they'd clean forgotten about Mrs. Patterson. After the apologies, Patterson explained that every now and again his missus visited him from London, they were separated but friends and there was sometimes family business to discuss, and if he heard of anyone else coming round nosing in at his windows he'd take a shotgun to them. "Waving to cars," he muttered, "combing her hair more likely—and every Tom, Dick and Peeping Harry watching."

'Naturally, everyone was ashamed, though behind his back they questioned these visits from a separated wife, it wasn't right, they thought. Yet why wasn't it right? They were married, weren't they? And so on. In any case, everyone avoided the place in future: there was little reason to be up there and nobody wanted to be suspected of peeping. Once again, it blew over.

'Until the time came when the authorities far away from the village finally noticed that these sporadic accidents occurred at night, and sent their own observers. These two men were concerned with lights and reflection and so forth, so they parked their own vehicle some way away and arrived quietly on foot.

'After they'd watched the main stream of by-pass traffic for some time, they turned their attention to the secondary road that branched in at this point. And as they did, the curtains parted in the window of the lodge-house only a few yards back from the road and framed in yellow electric light the pink shape of a woman appeared.

'For a few minutes, they were unnerved. They were there in the dark officially watching, yet here was something very close at hand they mustn't look at. They turned away but every so often they glanced back; they were officials, but also, however uneasily, men.

'The woman stood close to the window, half behind a curtain, looking sideways along the road—or perhaps at her garden hedge. After a while, the headlights of a car diverted the men's attention . . . they appeared like twin beacons along the lonely road, returning them to the job in hand, saving their consciences. Yet as the headlights passed, one of the men saw the woman wave, and the car swerve, and take the bend into the main road at a wider angle than was necessary—plainly the driver had seen this golden glowing figure at the window and been distracted . . . yet he drove on and away.

'The two men were puzzled—why, if the woman was greeting the car, didn't it stop? They were more than puzzled ten minutes later when the same thing happened again. And again, and again. She had waved to a half-dozen cars before she drew the curtains and the light went out. By that time the men were pretty certain they were on to something; but how to go about it? A barmy woman, they thought—and decided to report it thus.

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'They had a terrible time putting it into words. A likely story indeed . . . however, there were two of them in corroboration, and the station decided to send along a couple of uniformed men the following night. Quietly, of course.

'So shortly after dusk next day there were the two traffic observers and two uniformed men in the bushes across the road opposite Patterson's oddly Swiss-eaved lodge-house. It was a dark night, warm for March, but with low clouds drifting across to hide the stars; and the men could not risk a smoke nor talk much above a whisper but only watch the black eaves of the lodge pitched low against the wide muffled night beyond. A smell of wettish earth, an occasional car; and the low headlights and thrum and swish of the regular by-pass traffic a few yards off at the corner itself. Occasionally raised headlights passed across the mere house itself, as if erecting it like a theatrical set-piece, fretted eaves and twirled chimneys and patterned Victorian brick suddenly there for a passing second.

'Two hours went by. The uniformed men had begun to mutter at the others for their blasted story—did they say the woman was barmy, or were they talking about themselves? And so on. But one of them, who had made a few casual enquiries down at the village, wondered privately whether he had made himself sufficiently circum-spect—perhaps he'd let on too much and alerted this electrical merchant about his visiting wife, or whoever it was, and he had his own ideas about *that* . . . when suddenly a light snapped on in an upstairs window, the curtains were pulled apart, and a woman leant out looking along the road. Exactly as described: naked, and with long golden hair.

'The men strained their eyes up—but although she was near enough, the play of light from the room seemed to veil rather than hide much of her detail. It was difficult to make out the expression on her face; nor, for instance, did the nipples on her breasts show. Yet she was there plain enough, a pink and gold torso framed by the window—unmistakable.

'When a car came trundling along, they saw her lean further out and wave, wave, wave, and as the car passed they caught in the receding noise of its engine the echo of a shrill cry . . . "Hi!" . . . before she drew herself back half behind the curtain.

"Well that's that," said the sergeant to himself, "and now I suppose we take action? But exactly what?" And he was reviewing the possibilities when another car approached travelling faster and the woman waved again and called something and the car this time braked, and swerved out as the driver must have turned his head looking up at the window but he never braked to stop, only continued not looking where he was going out on to the by-pass and then a wild scream of brakes from another car travelling at speed and the one hard loud thump of metal meeting metal before like a big empty can rolling came three lesser hollow banging sounds and then dead silence.

'Three of the men rushed to where it had happened, and the sergeant raced across the road and began banging on the door. He called up at the open window. The light went out. The sergeant shouted again, louder, and a man's voice answered: "Coming!"

'Patterson in a dressing-gown opened the door. The sergeant told him there had been an accident and he wished to speak to the woman upstairs. Patterson stood there looking round his own small parlour—the door opened straight on to the red-tiled floor—as if he were searching it for the sergeant's sake. "What woman?" he said, "there isn't any woman." The sergeant told him that yes there was, and Patterson said the sergeant's eyes must have been deceiving him, so the sergeant said: "Mind if I go up and look?"

'Patterson looked at the floor and said nothing. What was crossing his mind then? Was he so sure of himself? Or was he praying the sergeant wouldn't make too thorough a search? Or was his poor brain simply confounded and helplessly blank? . . . Anyway, the sergeant went up the stairs and into the three small rooms one after the other.

'There was no one there.

'Then he started banging open the cupboards, and raising window-sashes to judge the drop and by this time the others were back for water and cloth for bandages and a tourniquet. There was one dead, and two badly hurt out on the road, and one man was walked in to sit bleeding and blue-white on a chair. No telephone. They'd sent a car on for an ambulance.

'Then the sergeant thought he'd check on the drawers in the bed-

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room that gave on to the road, just to see if there were a woman's things there.

'He found only a few rough men's shirts and woollen underpants, ties and socks. But then, stuffed underneath, he saw a tress of fair hair. He uncovered it, and pulled out a long brassy wig.

'At that moment he heard a noise behind him, and his eye switched along from the drawer to the floor to see Patterson's feet standing there. What he saw were wool bedroom slippers and what looked like pinkish wool socks and the bottom of a dressing-gown; but the socks were too long, they were stockings, they would go up higher beneath the dressing-gown—abruptly the sergeant thought of a circus and in the same second he was across the room, and just as Patterson was saying: "That's my wife's toopy, her own isn't what it was—" the sergeant had bumped against him and as if clutching to keep his balance, opened the dressing-gown right out—to show Patterson dressed from head to foot in wool combinations, faded, stained pinkish from wear or washed-out dye so that indeed they looked like flesh-pink tights.

'And that was it.

'They took him away. It seemed a rare and crazy kind of affair, as much a sad circus as the tights themselves. At first they assumed that he was some kind of transvestite. He was very shocked at such an idea. And this it was that drew from him the fact that once he'd been in a car driven by a chap who'd swerved while looking up at a woman undressing at a window. And when he'd chanced to take that particular corner house the memory recurred to him one night as he was undressing at his own uncurtained window, with a car passing . . . and then he went back over the whole story, just as I've told it forwards, and they retraced what evidence they could, from his wife and from Deane, and there you are, as apparently absurd a chain of facts as you could imagine. But tell me—after all that—do you feel you believe it now?'

'Well, ye-es, but . . .'

'That doesn't sound like the suspension of disbelief.'

'Oh, I believe it all right. But it's more that—somehow I still don't *want* to believe it.'

'Offended your juju? Then you ought to go and visit him.

William Sansom

You understand lunatic asylums, they're part of the dear old pattern of things. Go to where they've put him, and you'll get all the fact you want. You'll find a man who looks dead. He just looks dead inside a body living on its own : hands, arms, legs move round him like parts of a separate organism, a parasite feeding its slow life on a nothingness within. Only one affirmative gesture left. One of the hands, all the time, never stopping, scratches gently at a patch at the side of his head, where the hair's quite gone, leaving a small reddish circle of baldness.'

F. Scott Fitzgerald

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The Science of Life

BY ROGER PILKINGTON

What is life? It is a particular mode of operation of the natural forces and laws . . . THE CORNHILL 1860.

TWO hundred years ago the Botanicorum Princeps—the honorary title is taken from the epitaph on his cathedral tombstone—strode through the lanes and over the fields, discoursing upon everything which he saw or heard in the world of nature around him. An English visitor who attended these ‘herborising lectures’ described how the *Princeps* ‘was attended by a band of trumpets and French-horns, and sallied out at the head of 200 or 300 students divided into detached companies. When he was inclined to explain any curious plant, bird, or insect, which had either fallen under his own notice, or was brought to him by any of the students, the stragglers were called together by the sound of music, and crowding round their master listened in respectful silence while he offered his observations.’ The excursions were notable social events of the Swedish summer season but they were to be of greater importance than the students and musicians could have realised, for the master was Carl Linnaeus, professor of botany at Uppsala, and upon his observations the main stream of the biological thought of today was to be founded.

‘The *genitalia* of plants we regard with delight, of animals with abomination, and of ourselves with strange thoughts,’ Linnaeus wrote in his *Philosophia Humana*. It may have been these strange thoughts which led him to collect records of men who deceived their wives and were in turn double-crossed by their spouses, but the more delightful aspects as shown by the plants intrigued him to such a degree that he made a close study of what he described as the ‘floral nuptials.’ The petals of flowers he viewed as ‘Bridal Beds which the Creator has so gloriously arranged, adorned with such noble bed

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curtains and perfumed with so many sweet scents that the bridegroom there may celebrate his nuptials with his bride with all the greater solemnity.'

It was his absorption in the nuptials that led Linnaeus to classify plants according to genital structure, and to show both among the plants and the animals a definite similarity of build and design between species. Yet not for a moment did he see in these likenesses a hint of a possible common origin except in the hand of a masterly creator. He hoped only that his classification would show organisms to be built to a brilliant plan, reflecting certain excellently conceived basic types of structure which existed in the mind of the Creator before the actual manufacture of all the separate species was put in hand. Yet it was the careful work of Linnaeus which fired others to search for a more material relationship between the species, and which led a hundred years later to Charles Darwin's masterly exposition of the way in which species might conceivably have originated by variation and selection.

Darwin realised, as Malthus had already suggested, that animals had many more offspring than were needed to maintain the numbers of any species. Many were eliminated, and it was reasonable to suppose that there must be an actual struggle between individuals of the same species, and competition with others. And as animals of any type could be seen to vary, those with the more useful variations would survive longer, and if their favourable characteristics were inherited there would be a gradual drift and change towards better adaptation, until at last a new species was produced.

Simple and obvious though his theory was, Darwin suggested no means by which the new species actually came to be separated, nor did he realise that an adaptation in one part might need others throughout the body if the creatures were to survive at all. For example, if an animal is doubled in length and breadth and height the bulk of its body is increased eightfold, but its skin area (which regulates its temperature) is only multiplied four times. So, too, is the surface area of the stomach and intestines, through which food for the disproportionately larger bulk has to be supplied. If Darwin did not himself recognise these facts, nor suggest an actual mechanism for species-formation, such problems of evolution have been the focus of

attention of biologists in the hundred years since the *Origin* was published.

Not that biology has been concerned only with such matters. The last hundred years have brought immense advances in our knowledge of the relationships between organisms, of their physiology and microchemistry, behaviour and migration, their breeding and development. Much of what has been discovered has revolutionised agricultural practice, and has increased the yields of crops and the milk output of cattle to an extent which a century ago would have seemed inconceivable. The cows of the Victorian era calved with no assistance beyond the selection by the farmer of a suitable mate, but four of every ten cattle which placidly munch the rich fertiliser-assisted pastures of modern Britain owe their existence to bovine A.I.D., and many of them have been sired by champion bulls long deceased, whose admirable paternal characteristics have been banked in flasks of diluted semen stored in deep-freezers at -79° Centigrade, to be drawn upon later as required.

Pure and applied research in biology are indivisible. Work undertaken in order to find a means of ridding an area of some particularly destructive insect pest may give results which shed new and unexpected light upon problems of evolution, and on the other hand highly rarefied research on the genetics of such humanly useless organisms as the banana-fly or the evening primrose has constantly thrown up new facts which have made it possible to increase the yield per acre of wheat, reduce mortality among new-born babes, produce virus-resistant strains of fruit and vegetables, or successfully defend malicious paternity charges before the magistrates. And the same essential unity of the science of life has meant that almost every fresh discovery, even of the most mundane or veterinary nature, has helped in some degree to shed new light upon the twin fundamental problems of biology.

These questions are the same today as a century ago. Firstly there is the problem of *what life really is*, and secondly the question of how its ever-changing diversity is brought about and stabilised, if only for an infinitesimal period of cosmic time—in other words, *the mechanics of evolution*. Although the final solution of either or both of these basic problems would in no way affect the day-to-day living of the

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world's billions, the search not only fascinates the biologist himself but holds implications for the philosopher and the theologian, and to a certain extent interests the ordinary man who has his wits about him but does not in the least understand the biological niceties of his own structure.

Until recently it was the second of these two points which received most attention, and the impetus given by the publication of the *Origin* was sufficient to start a period of rather academic discussion in which geologists, botanists and zoologists variously accepted or rejected evolution as a whole, or natural selection as its guiding principle, or an animal ancestry for man. Yet very little was produced in the way of new data. As early as 1821 Meckel had remarked that the embryos of the higher animals—including man—passed through stages which somewhat resembled lower animals, and Darwin himself had suggested that this fitted in well enough with the notion of evolution from lower animals, but it remained for Haeckel to formulate in 1866 his Biogenetic Law which claimed that in its embryonic stages a creature recapitulated the past history of the species and, as it were, climbed up its own family tree to the bud which represented its own adult state. Thus the frog tadpole represented a fishy ancestor, and even in the mammal embryo one could notice a fish-like stage with primordial gill-clefts. All this however was less solid support for evolutionists than the accidental discovery in the lithographic slate quarries of Solenhofen, where the remains of the *Archaeopteryx* were brought to light. This curious creature admirably combined structures of bird and reptile, and gave support to Darwin's rather improbable suggestion—as it then seemed—that birds were in fact developed from reptiles, in spite of the warm blood which they shared with the mammals.

The old argument between those who believed in fortuitous variations and the supporters of Lamarck's earlier view that an animal could improve its species by acquiring new characters during its lifetime was abruptly settled, however, by Weismann's publication in 1885 of *Die Kontinuität des Keim-plasmas*. Weismann showed that the reproductive cells were already preformed at the time of birth and that the gonads in which they were contained were merely carried in the body almost as though they were parasites. The body or soma

merely served, in Weismann's view, as an elaborate mechanism to carry on the germ-substance from generation to generation, and even if this concept of an organism was somewhat exaggerated it at least made it impossible for biologists to believe any longer (as even Darwin had done) in the idea of adaptations being caused by use or disuse of a part of the body and their being passed on to a creature's descendants. The giraffe might stretch its neck in reaching for leaves, the blacksmith might develop mighty muscles, the athlete a swiftness of foot, but with the germ cells of the next generation already formed and isolated it was inconceivable that such acquired characteristics or skills could by any means be implanted in their structure. Weismann reinforced his argument by an experiment which to the modern biologist must appear rather ill-conceived, for he chopped off the tails of new-born mice for several generations and showed that their successors had tails just as long as those of their ancestors.

It was not Weismann's mutilated mice but his demonstration of the apartness of the reproductive tissue which marked a turning point in biological thought, and yet it is interesting to note that although most biologists have realised for three-quarters of a century that changes and improvements and adaptations acquired during life are not hereditary, political reformers have never been able to accept this somewhat embarrassing fact of biology. Even today, many believe that better conditions of living will actually improve the qualities of the nation of the future, instead of just giving immediate benefits to the current generation. The biological evidence, however, points in quite the opposite direction.

The key which was at last to unlock the secret of how variations might be inherited was not forged in any university or professorial research-group, but by a monk who taught science to the novitiates in a Silesian monastery. It was only in the decade after the publication of the *Origin* that Gregor Mendel undertook his experiments, trials which even today can still be regarded as models of careful planning and logical deduction, and in doing so he laid the foundations for the whole of modern genetics, but he reported his results only in the *Transactions of the Natural History Society of Brünn*—an association which, we can only assume, consisted of individuals quite unable to grasp the significance of his discoveries and to realise that for the first

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time the secret of the inheritance of variations was laid bare. Curiously enough, Mendel also outlined his discoveries in personal letters to one of the most notable German botanists of the day, but the effect was no different. Not until 1900 were his experiments brought to light when three biologists, from three different countries, chanced almost simultaneously to come across copies of the Br \ddot{u} nn Transactions.

Until that event it was generally believed that heredity was passed from parents to children by the 'blood'—though in the case of plants the blood was apparently absent and replaced by the vague concept of 'strain.' Bloods were supposed to mix in such a way that each child was thought to be a kind of fractionation composed of one-eighth of each of its great-grandparents, inheriting what was 'in the blood.' Mendel's great contribution lay in showing that particular traits were inherited in an all-or-none fashion, and not through dilution or mixing of blood, yet right up to the present the earlier notion has obstinately refused to die. Men zealous to protect a 'race' still talk of white blood and negro blood as being different—though they are not always averse to receiving the wrong sort in a transfusion after an operation—and fail to realise that race itself is not a fixed state but a variable average distribution of one or more alternative factors of the very type which Mendel himself discovered.

Mendel's ingenious work, in which he crossed peas which showed clearly defined alternative characteristics, showed that these traits were passed on from generation to generation unchanged, and without mixing. He rightly concluded that they were controlled by *factors* carried in the germ cells. Some were 'dominant' and suppressed others which were 'recessive' and yet the recessive factors would still be there in the germ cells, even if in one or more generations they produced no visible effect whatsoever because their actions were overridden by dominant ones. Mendel's factors were soon to become the *genes* of biologists, and his own name was to survive in the term *mendelian inheritance*, a remarkable testimony to the brilliance of the work which he carried out on his own initiative quite outside the established scientific circles and institutions of his time.

Genetics quickly became highly fashionable, and de Vries—one of the three scientists to rediscover Mendel's work—found that alternative inherited characters such as Mendel himself had used might

turn up suddenly and unexpectedly and then breed true. For a gene which thus changed he coined the term *mutation*, and his discovery opened the way for the modern work on the means by which mutations are actually brought about—a line of research which at the present time has become of great importance in connection with the long term effects of radio-active fall-out. Early in the present century it became clear that variations in nature were of two distinct types, the larger inherited differences (controlled by genes) and the more usual variations such as those found in a row of plants or a flock of hens, where individuals differed from each other through a continual and overlapping series of size, shape, and detail. It was this latter class of variation which Darwin had believed to be the stuff on which natural selection could work, and yet the early work on genetics showed beyond a shadow of doubt that such traits were not inherited at all.

It was soon realised that the way in which genes or 'factors' were handed in single doses from each parent to form a doubled system in the offspring had a curious parallel in the behaviour of the *chromosomes*, the mysterious rod-like objects which appeared during the division of the nucleus of a cell. Chromosomes had been discovered as early as 1848 by Hofmeister when he was studying the division of cells in the plant *Tradescantia*, but their significance was not realised until the geneticists adopted as their maid-of-all-work the fruit-fly *Drosophila*. This admirable little creature had the advantage of raising hundreds of progeny in a matter of days, and was easily kept in large numbers in half-pint milk-bottle populations feeding on a jelly of meal and molasses.

It is a curious fact that every major advance in the science of genetics has come from studies on *Drosophila*, and even the now popular mice and moulds are hardly more than also-rans. Yet the basic unity of life is such that discoveries made in one animal can be extended (with surprisingly little checking) to others and even to plants, and almost all our basic knowledge of human heredity has its origins in discoveries made in crossing variant strains of the diminutive red-eyed fly often to be seen on the rotten fruit at the back of a vendor's street-barrow. In 1910 T. H. Morgan crossed a fly which had vestigial wings and grey body with another having the genes for normal wings and a black body, and he showed that these two pairs of alternative

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characters were not shuffled independently in each generation as Mendel had described in his experiments with peas. On the contrary, the traits were either inherited together or not at all. The rational explanation was that the genes were actually carried on the chromosomes, and that where two genes were passed on in 'linkage' it was because they were both on the same chromosome. This was soon proved to be correct, for *Drosophila* had four chromosome pairs, and its mutations—of which several hundred have been catalogued since Morgan's day—were found to be handed on in four linkage blocks.

As time went on, modifying genes, suppressors, polygenes, inversions, incomplete dominance and a host of other concepts were introduced to account more precisely—and more correctly—for the details of inheritance in every creature from mouse to man, but these technicalities are of interest only to the geneticist. The important work of identifying the actual means by which large-step variations were inherited had already been accomplished, and even if the modern geneticist looks upon genes not so much as units but as constituent parts of a *genotype* which varies from individual to individual and expresses itself in the *phenotype* or actual structure of that creature, the mode of inheritance is still the same.

The last quarter of a century has seen biologists exploring new fields in their attempts to study evolutionary mechanisms. Previously, an organism had been thought of as little more than a structure, a thing built up from physical parts the styling and dimensions of which were the work of the genes, but such a concept is now seen as a great oversimplification. There are inherited differences of physiology and biochemistry, and of behaviour patterns, and no animal living in a laboratory milk bottle and destined to be drowned in a bath of oil when its breeding days are over can really be thought to represent an organism living the natural life for which it is adapted and into which it has been evolved. Life involves reactions, behaviour, trial and error perhaps, and in many cases an obvious effort on the part of an animal to succeed and survive. There is the whole complex business of subspecies too, with local populations or *demes* becoming adapted to life in a locality which has special conditions of its own. Food supplies may vary, protective background, predators, competitors, and fellow-travellers will vary from deme to deme, and only by a

study of all these enormously complex relationships can the findings of genetics be interpreted in a way which may one day shed light on the true mechanics of selection. Meanwhile a species is presumably still evolving by *divergent* evolution, and life as a whole is moving along the time scale of the earth in slow *successional* evolution, in which the current types are slowly replaced by others.

It may well be that our knowledge of this long-term successional evolution will never be complete, for the simple reason that the birth of a new species involves genetic changes so slow that most biologists would estimate the time required to be in the order of a million years. The data from which judgments might be made is therefore buried beyond recall, for though one may dig up a fossil and examine its structure the physiology and behaviour and communal life of extinct types cannot possibly be deduced from mere physical remains. As regards radiative adaptation within a species the position is not quite so desperate, for occasionally some type of creature changes in an adaptive way in so short a time that the shift is noticeable.

Dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT) has been one of man's favourite weapons against insects during the last thirty years, but in 1947 it was reported both in Italy and Sweden that in various country areas the houseflies were no longer affected by it. Since then, the same immunity has been developed in flies from England to Mexico and Egypt to Peru. Laboratory experiments have shown that a resistant population of flies may emerge in as little as three generations, and bedbugs and mosquitoes, cockroaches and body lice have all proved able to adapt to the sprays of the local authority's disinfestation officers. In Colorado the codling moth has overcome arsenic sprays, and scale insects in Californian orchards live unperturbed amid the fumes of deadly hydrocyanic gas. Certain bacteria have become not only resistant to streptomycin but unable to live unless they can have it provided as an article of their diet.

Most striking of all, perhaps, are the adaptations of several species of moths to life in industrial Britain. These moths have two forms, a light and a dark one, and the difference between the colour variants is easily shown to be caused by one mendelian gene alone. The dark forms are in fact the more vigorous, yet until the middle of the nineteenth century they were either very rare or quite unknown, and

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it is believed that this was because the lighter colour had a certain survival value amid the pale tones of the rural surroundings, in that birds found them harder to see. Black individuals, when they appeared, were quickly snapped up and had no chance to breed. Then, with the coming of a general rain of soot and tar which began to fall over the countryside around the developing industrial towns, the scales were tipped in favour of the black forms. At last these had a chance to escape the sharp eyes of insectivorous birds, and within decades some of the local populations came to consist of dark forms only whilst others—in less polluted areas—were mixed. This adaptation to a blackening of the landscape may well be reversed again when coal is replaced by oil or atomic energy as the main industrial fuel, and when the Clean Air Acts have had time to restore something of the verdure of the surroundings. In the early 1920s the fall of soot and tar in Fulham was more than 600 tons per square mile per year—a figure exceeded by far in Pittsburgh and other centres of heavy industry—but before the Second World War this downpour had been cut by nearly one-third, and since then by another third. The heyday of the melanic mutant of *Odontoptera bidentata* may be nearly over.

Yet even if a few adaptations happen so swiftly that they can be studied, the biologist who tries to account for the very different existing forms of closely related species is bound to rely for the most part on his imagination and his detective skill. He can do little more than speculate as to past causes, and he can have little hope of knowing whether his theories merely happen to fit the facts or are ultimately true. And as a result he becomes so ingenious in his reasoning that he can sooner or later produce a sensible explanation—or several quite different but equally watertight theories—to cover almost any set of observed facts. This is not to suggest that biologists are deceitful or even mistaken, but just that the majority of facts can be included under the umbrella of natural selection without risk of contradiction—because no contrary evidence is available.

The case of mimicry will make this clearer. It is a curious fact that many harmless insects are such good copies of other types that only an expert eye can tell them apart. They are the neatest imaginable forgeries of others which, because of their stings or poison hairs or

unpleasant taste are avoided by birds and other predators. Wing shape, body proportions, bands of colour, spots, even the buzz of some noxious species may all be simulated by another insect which is not closely related to it at all. False bees and hornets, and bogus poisonous caterpillars are very successful confidence tricks of nature.

In Darwin's day it was not altogether easy to see how these mimic types could have arisen through natural selection, because many separate variations and distortions of the presumed original shape and colour had to be incorporated before the deception was complete, and until every one of these changes had been achieved the fraud could not have been convincing. Selection, it was argued, could not have favoured the development of the mimicry, because the forgery would not be of any advantage until it was complete enough to be effective. Genetics only made the problem more acute by showing that the chance of any one insect receiving all these useful mutations and none in the reverse direction was inconceivably remote.

Yet such difficulties no longer bother the modern biologist. He merely sweeps them aside by reasoning. The bird which finds a particular butterfly distasteful—either through youthful indiscretion when hungry, or from inherited behaviour—does not see it as humans see it, he says. All that the bird notices is the bands, or perhaps the spots, or the style of flight. Experiments can be done to show that many animals do indeed recognise another species, or even their own, by some quite small characteristic alone, and if this is the case one may assume that only one of the mimic's characteristics is of any importance for bird A, and this trait could easily and quickly be developed by natural selection.

The layman's natural objection is to ask why, in that case, the mimic is such a detailed copy of its protecting type, when a mere single row of spots would preserve it just as well. And to this the biologist replies that the mimic insect is in danger not only from bird A but from birds B to L, and certain reptiles, rodents and other creatures too. Each of these recognises the protecting species by some different feature, so the mimic gradually acquires each point of similarity separately and by natural selection. At this point the non-biologist says yes, he can see that might be the case, but he would like to know the identity of all the alleged predators. He will then be told that in

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fact there are none, because the mimicry is so good that neither the protecting species nor its mimic have any enemies at all. The birds and beasts learned their lesson centuries ago, perhaps tens of thousands of years in the past, and the danger is over. In frustration the layman then says that if this is so, then there is surely no need to keep up the pretence so precisely. If the danger is over, variation and mutation should be causing the mimic to be less like its protector than before. But the biologist then answers that if the deception were not continued, the harmless insect would at once find itself attacked. Probably, he points out, mutations away from accurate mimicry occur, but the moment they appear the individuals no longer look like their protector in the way which is relevant to some bird or other, and so they are eliminated. In desperation the layman then asks what bird does the eliminating, and he is told that this information is not available. It depends upon which aspect of the mimicry mutated back again, and as mutations are in any event extremely rare the biologist cannot be blamed if he does not happen to be present in person when the unfortunate insect is caught.

Now this reasoning may very well be entirely correct, but whether it is so or not is likely to be quite beyond either observation or experimental proof. Even in the matter of the melanic forms of moths in industrial areas the biologist can do no more than produce a reasonable explanation and stick to it until proved wrong. In spite of the vast amount of current research into behaviour and populations, biochemistry and organic balance and genetics, he can do little more than proclaim probable mechanisms for adaptation, and for the long-term changes in the forms of living things. And yet if the picture of the origin of new species is still far from distinct, it is a remarkable testimony to the theories of the last century that in general outline they have stood the test of time, and although in some respects they have been modified each new discovery has only tended to show that the visions of such men as Darwin and Weismann, Mendel and Morgan, were no wild fancies but the imaginative sweeps of very great minds.

When Carl Linnaeus herborised to the sound of French horns he, as a naturalist, was showing to his public some of the ingenuities of organic structure of which he was aware. Today professional

naturalists are themselves a species almost extinct, for biology has inevitably become divided into a number of highly specialised sciences, and none can hope to keep abreast of the discoveries in every field of research. But whereas those who followed Linnaeus through the fields around Uppsala had for the most part no inkling of the real wonders of the unity of life, today every man and woman is at least aware of some of its astonishing facets. And with this awareness comes understanding of a wider kind, and instead of fear or mere curiosity there is almost a reverence for even the humblest manifestations of life itself.

Life is mysterious, ingenious beyond human description, and the biologist perhaps realises this more acutely than others. Reasonable rather than capricious, it is the most complex arrangement of the same materials which, in a lesser degree of organisation, form the inert stage on which it plays its slowly-changing act. And little by little the movements and actions are becoming clearer.

'What is life? It is a particular mode of operation of the natural forces and laws. . . . We can see that in the organic world the laws we know in the inorganic are still supreme. But the results are new.

We do not require, for organic life, to assume any new or special power; the common and all-pervading powers of nature are enough.

Either the material world is dead and life does not spring from it; or, if life springs from it, then it is not dead. If it be proved that the forces and laws of the inorganic world constitute all that is to be found of physical power or principle in organic life, then does not the conclusion follow that the apparently inorganic world is truly living too?'

Those words were written by a biologist in the first volume of the *Cornhill Magazine*, published just one hundred years ago at the moment when Darwin had given to biology an impetus which has carried it from one success to another. Yet they might have been written in our own day, for they are characteristic of the modern outlook. The biologist seeks ordinary causes of a physical nature for the astonishing diversity and intricacy of the life which he studies, yet in doing so

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he does not debase life to mere mechanics but is more than ever aware that the whole of the tangible universe is pregnant with the possibility of becoming organised into living things. The vastness of the time-scale may make it impossible to show all the steps which have led from the gases of the primordial atmosphere to man with his hopes and ideals and aspirations, but the unity of nature is there none the less, more awe-inspiring in its ingenuity as each fresh discovery is made.

"Time hath, my lord, a wallet at his back . . ."

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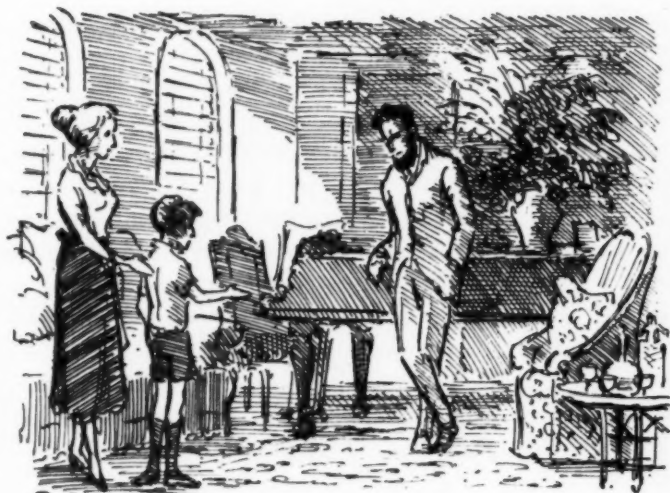
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BLACKIE

Contact with the Devil

BY JOHN VERNEY

An episode from the autobiography of Paul Pot¹



I

"I M-MAY as well do it once," Uncle Talbot grumbled crossly as we set off from the bungalow on a Sunday morning, about a fortnight before Christmas 1921, to cover the few hundred yards along the red-dusty road to the Garrison Church. Having arranged to look round the Old City with Mr. Briggs, editor of the *Mukra Gazette* and the only Englishman in Mukra who knew anything of the local sights, he was put out because my father insisted that it was his duty to come with us instead. Uncle Talbot was writing a travel book on Persia and India and had arrived to stay earlier in the week.

¹ Earlier episodes appeared in *The Cornhill*, Nos. 1008 and 1016.

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"You'll be able to include a chapter on Anglo-Indian church architecture, darling," my mother said, laughing. She was a gay, beautiful and erratic person with whom, I had soon realised, Uncle Talbot got on better than with his reserved and military brother. In their Mukra circle my parents were known as 'old Robert and his crackpot.' I was indebted for the information to my friend Elsie Roper-Bassett whose own father, a major on my father's staff, seemed to spend most of his time taking my mother for rides or to watch polo.

My father, as we hastened to the church, was also in a rage—I supposed because he had been kept waiting. Whereas my thoughts turned anxiously on the likelihood of having to meet my governess, Miss Horrocks, at the service. In a tempestuous scene two days before I had bitten her hand and she had hysterically slapped my face, an incident which gave fresh weight to her often-expressed belief that the only hope for me was to be shipped home to her brother's prep. school in England. Elsie's elder brother Cyril was there already and my parents had agreed to send me as soon as it could be arranged, a course of action which impending tragic events merely hastened. Meanwhile further lessons with Miss Horrocks had been suspended for a fortnight, to give her feelings and my bruises time to recover.

As my father had feared, we arrived late, just as they were starting. With bowed heads, my parents and I tip-toed over the noisy flagstones to our seats. Uncle Talbot, less devout or less inhibited, stared unconcernedly about him. He leant across me, pretending to kneel in prayer, and whispered loudly to my mother, "W-what a priceless b-building." I took him to mean that it had cost a great deal.

My parents regularly attended Sunday morning service, more as a matter of form than of Faith, and on the same principle had taken me with them since my eighth birthday the previous February. A small and isolated front pew pertained to my father's job and every Sunday, for the first few months, our exposed situation had involved me in tortures of self-consciousness. A hundred pairs of malicious eyes, I fancied, watched me stumble over such obstacles as when to sit down and stand up, whether to bow the head in the Creed, to say nothing of the agonised rush to find the right psalm or hymn in time. Nor was my mother, at whom I furtively peeped for my cue, always a

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reliable guide. She would often—for several ghastly seconds—continue to browse curiously in Hymn or Prayer Book after the congregation had changed position.

By this Sunday, however, I had evolved a technique for *seeming* to do the right thing at the right place, which allowed my mind to puzzle over a phrase long after my lips had uttered it. While my outer self kept pace with the rest in the *Venite* my inner self would still be wondering what things I had done which I ought not to have done or how, precisely, I could be said to have erred and strayed like a lost sheep.

Recently I had become aware of certain recurrent words and their ominous import. Sin, Wickedness . . . Body, Soul . . . Temptation . . . Squeezed now between Uncle Talbot and my mother, as the service progressed I speculated on their meaning. The Body I knew all about. The Soul, I gathered, was roughly like the breath in a balloon which continued after the balloon had punctured. But Sin . . . Wickedness . . . They were not, I vaguely knew, quite the same as naughtiness, which simply meant annoying grown-ups by leaving undone those things—such as trouser buttons and shoe laces—which I ought to have done. Grown-ups could not be naughty because they were allowed to do what they wanted. But they could, to judge by the Prayer Book, be wicked. . . .

With Temptation I was on firmer ground. I knew about Temptation. At this minute I was myself being sorely tempted—to turn my head and try to spot Elsie. The Roper-Bassetts were not regular churchgoers, but when they came they occupied a pew slightly behind ours and across the aisle. I flirted with this temptation for a while, rather smugly relishing my ability to resist it, until we all sat for the Lesson when head-turning was too conspicuous to be feasible.

I had found I could get through the Lesson without fidgeting by studying the tablets on the wall behind the lectern. The largest and best of these recorded that the church had been built fifty-nine years before, in 1862, to commemorate ninety-seven English men, women and children massacred on this spot in the Mutiny; and even depicted the lurid scene with a marble bas-relief. And that gave my mind plenty to chew on through several further stages of the service. I was not sorely tempted again until we knelt for the awful Litany.

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We had repeated the first refrain a couple of times before I decided to risk a quick look around.

"O holy, blessed and glorious Trinity . . ." I began, shifting my body and head in a way which I hoped would be mistaken by those behind for extreme religious fervour.

I found myself staring straight at Miss Horrocks. The hand holding her Prayer Book was bandaged and she was kneeling beside a large man with a black beard.

". . . Have mercy upon us miserable sinners," she was saying, indeed we were both saying, when our eyes suddenly met.

"Well may you ask Him for mercy," her look clearly implied.

Acting as if I had all the time been in a religious trance and had not seen her, I nevertheless turned quickly to my front. And thus stayed, through the remainder of the service.

Afterwards we joined the groups chatting outside the door. There was no sign of the Roper-Bassetts but I noticed Miss Horrocks in conversation with the bearded stranger. She approached us, obviously intending to introduce him. Rather pointedly Uncle Talbot strolled away, saying he had to get back. I made haste to catch up with him.

"Oh, hallo, P-Paul. Coming with me? S-splendid."

We set off together, I lengthening my stride to try and keep in step.

"It's worth g-going to church occasionally, if only for the pleasure of c-coming out again, don't you think?" he said after a minute.

"Yes," I said doubtfully. And then, emboldened, "Who was that man? Didn't you want to talk to him?"

"Not much. His name's Stormbush. He's a sort of faith-healer who specialises in casting out the D-Devil."

"Do you know him then?"

"Slightly. My sister, your Aunt Cicely, was rather an admirer of his once. He had quite a following in England during the war. Then he g-got into trouble . . . about various things, and left. I'm told he's built up a new practice out here. P-plenty of people in India with nothing better to do than f-fuss about sin. If it comes to that, p-plenty of sin, too. . . ."

We walked in silence again till we entered our garden. Uncle Talbot picked a carnation from the border beside the drive.

"What does sin *mean* exactly, Uncle Talbot?"

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"Oh Lord, don't ask me. I'm never too sure myself." Then, feeling that he could, or at least should, explain it better than that, he added, "S-sin is really doing something which you know is wrong. Like . . . say, cheating."

"Is fornication a sort of cheating?"

"Where on earth did you hear that word?"

"This morning. In the Litany it said 'From fornication, and all other deadly sin, good Lord deliver us.'"

Talbot laughed, fixing the carnation in his buttonhole. "A sort of ch-cheating . . . well, yes, in some circumstances it could be. But it's too c-complicated for you to understand at your age. Wait till you're older—time enough to worry then." We climbed the steps to the verandah and entered the drawing-room.

"So sin is a grown-up thing?" I persisted, rather relieved.

"Oh definitely. Like p-polo and amateur theatricals. Now buzz off to the nursery, there's a good chap. I'm going to g-give myself a stiff drink."

In the nursery the *ayah* was amusing Scylla and Carrie with a toy my mother had bought in the bazaar, a wooden monkey which if correctly balanced on its stand could be made to swing up and down. I joined uninvited in the game, at length swinging the monkey so roughly that he fell off the table on to the floor and broke an arm. Carrie began to cry and Scylla said, "You always spoil everything."

Defiantly I wound the gramophone and put on the record. Above the strains of Dame Nellie Melba offering the Keys of Heaven, I heard my parents return from church. It sounded as if they had a visitor with them, though the voices, by then, were drowned by a baritone's lamentation for Poor Old Joe.

My mother came in to see us. She was shown the broken monkey and told the cause. "I don't expect Paul *meant* to do it," she said.

"Oh yes he *did*," the twins said.

"Well, never mind. I expect I can buy another one in the bazaar tomorrow. Paul, I want you to come with me next door for a minute—to meet someone."

Her tone of voice reminded me of the time I had been taken to have a tooth out under gas and I accompanied her with misgivings.

The drawing-room was empty save for the tall, dark-bearded man

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I had seen with Miss Horrocks in church. He stood leaning against the piano with an indefinable air of arrogance, but I was too shy and nervous to examine him closely.

"Darling, this is Mr. Stormbush. He is—a kind of doctor and I want him just to have a talk with you. There's nothing to worry about."

I wondered whether to shake hands, as I was constantly being reminded to do when introduced, but he took no notice of me and continued a conversation about Miss Horrocks whom evidently they had been discussing when my mother went to fetch me.

"You knew her mother was German? Actually Bavarian, a cousin of my parents, though my family has always lived over the frontier, at Bad-Gastein."

"Gastein . . ." My mother repeated the name and seemed startled. "I think I did know, now you mention it. Your parents ran that hotel, didn't they? We all stayed there once, oh years ago, before the war. And of course Miss Horrocks and her brother were there too. I can't say I remember you."

"No doubt. I was only a youth. I worked in the hotel, helping with the beds and so forth."

My mother made an impatient little gesture towards me, implying it was time he started on our business, but he refused to hurry.

"Yes, the excellent Mr. Horrocks was also there. . . . Very manly. . . . So your son will be going to his prep. school, Chilmarsh?" He gave me a quick glance, both amused and scornful, and added, "I think the boy takes more after his uncle than his father?"

"Quite possibly," my mother said curtly, leaving me to speculate which question she referred to. "Do you want to be alone with Paul or shall I stay?"

"You must do as you please. It is not of importance."

I sensed that he did not like my mother much, nor she him. She patted my shoulder and sat down in the background to give moral support, as at the dentist's.

When, years afterwards, I once asked Uncle Talbot about the bizarre interview between myself and Stormbush that followed, he ridiculed it as an absurd piece of nonsense which my parents agreed to on the

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spur of the moment to placate Miss Horrocks, and which, he maintained, could not possibly have done me either any harm or any good; or have had the slightest effect on me thereafter. I am not so sure. It is true that at the time I thought little of the interview which only lasted a minute or two. Still, it is rather odd that I have always remembered it so vividly.

Stormbush beckoned me to stand in front of him. Then he placed a hand on my head and fixed me, as the expression is, with his eyes. I have forgotten their colour—indeed I never particularly notice the colour of any eyes, only their look. And the look in this case, I do well recall, lacked all human warmth and made an exceedingly unpleasant impression. As did his appearance generally. His top lip was shaven, the dark beard sprouting from below a mouth in which several gold teeth glinted when he spoke. His light tropical suit was much crumpled and grease-stained, and the wrist resting on my head might have belonged to a living counterpart of the wooden toy I had just broken, so thickly matted was it with coarse hair.

His voice, on the other hand, was exceptionally agreeable, deep and powerful and yet quiet. He spoke to me in the stilted painstaking fashion of someone who has had very little experience of speaking to children.

"I think you are sometimes naughty, are you not?"

I was more awed than frightened, and a good deal embarrassed. I mumbled a non-committal reply.

"Do you know *why* people are naughty?"

"Er, no."

"They are naughty because the Devil gets inside them and makes them naughty."

"Oh? How does he get in? Do they swallow him?"

"Yes, in a manner of speaking you could say they do swallow him."

"Have I swallowed him?"

"Think of it like that, certainly. You have swallowed him. And I am going to try and help you to be less naughty by driving him out."

For a moment I felt alarmed, expecting gas, a dose of castor oil, I don't know what. But all that was required from me was to kneel on the carpet. He knelt too, placing both hands on my head.

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"Now," he said, "I want you to stay quite still and to try and think of nothing. Absolutely nothing."

We remained in that position for a long minute; he—I take it—in prayer, I half occupied with trying to make my teeming brain a blank, half with anticipating some internal convulsion. I could not help wondering which end the Devil would choose to make his exit.

I have been told that my mother—anxiously witnessing my ordeal—later maintained that at one point she definitely saw a vibration, like an electric charge, pass through Stormbush's arms into my head, after which a sort of dark radiance surrounded me for the tiniest fraction of a second and then vanished. But I cannot remember experiencing anything more dramatic than boredom. A demon of one kind—I am content to believe—really had been exorcised; but the vacuum was instantly filled by a demon of another. Shall we call him Guilt? And it is significant that when, immediately on rising to my feet, I returned to the nursery, I went straight up to my sisters and tearfully said, "I'm sorry I broke your monkey."

* * * * *

I remained in disgrace a fortnight and, for no reason I could understand, was prevented from seeing Elsie. Once, however, she managed to slip unobserved over the garden wall—a short, if fateful, meeting during which she told me her father said my mother rode a horse like a man. To which I answered—but never mind.

Without the distractions provided by Elsie and Miss Horrocks I was driven to entertaining myself, tormenting the *ayah* with my reiterated 'What can I do's,' or, between whiles, gathering such scraps of grown-up conversation as fell my way. Scylla and Carrie became reluctant tigers, to be stalked through the shrubs and flower-beds, and finally shot down by that intrepid white-hunter, Paul Pot. Until one morning Carrie escaped tearfully into the bungalow before I could stop her, an arrow firmly lodged through her hair.

I recall the particular morning well, because my father had come home unexpectedly and the sounds of a heated conversation between him and my mother reached us from time to time in the garden, filling even an intrepid white-hunter with foreboding. I had never heard my parents quarrel before. Both fascinated and scared, as if a

crack had appeared suddenly across the universe, which in a sense it had, I heard little, and followed less, of the argument. However, one sentence of my father's, by reversing in a stroke my childhood's illusion of grown-up moral infallibility, stayed for ever in my mind.

"For God's sake, Hilda, stop lying."

And I daresay it was that shock of discovery which put me off my aim and made me shoot the arrow closer to Carrie's head than I had intended.

"I'm dead! Paul killed me!" I heard her yell, as she ran indoors.

When my father came out he found me cowering behind a bougainvillea. He grabbed my weapon. It was the only occasion I ever saw him really angry.

"If I catch you using these again I'll give you a hiding you won't forget in a hurry all your life," he shouted, too indignant to heed the niceties of grammar; or of logic. For he destroyed the bow and arrows on the spot.

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Later in the day the *ayah* took us across to tea with the Briggses.

Among my father's Army friends it was considered vaguely disreputable to earn your living by Journalism, or indeed by any other intellectual means, and the consequent social prejudice against Mr. Briggs covered his offspring. Humphrey and Jacinth were rarely invited to the many local children's parties. When they did appear at one, they wore a sullen resentful manner, quite foreign to their happy boisterous selves at home, and so became the object of condescending pity by the mothers, of complacent tongue-clacking among the nannies.

As a family they were different to the other English families I knew in India and the difference troubled me, my vocabulary lacking the handy label 'bohemian' to describe, and so dispose of it. In their household parents and children lived much on top of one another, partly from want of space, but also on account of their attitude of mind. For example, Mr. Briggs often bathed the baby, a hardly conceivable occupation for my father or for Major Roper-Bassett.

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To my way of thinking at the time there was something rather attractively informal and messy about the arrangement, though its virtues are less apparent to me today.

My mother, who had nothing against the Briggses, in fact claimed to 'rather like them,' called their way of life hugger-mugger. Miss Horrocks called it squalid. But then she made no bones about disapproving of them thoroughly. Uncle Talbot astounded me by saying the Briggses were worth all the rest of the English in Mukra put together. Since many of the English in Mukra were notably rich and the Briggses were palpably poor, I imagined a vast hoard of gold, kept buried under the floor of Mr. Briggs' studio, but for some mysterious reason never brought out and put to use.

The so-called studio adjoined their bungalow and was a fascinating muddle of a place where Mr. Briggs potted plants, carpentered or did lino cuts, all with the same tools which lay about everywhere. We children were allowed to play in it when he wasn't playing in it himself and adjourned there now after tea, a meal which Mrs. Briggs prepared and served herself, another mark of difference.

While the girls bashed bits of wood into toys, or toys into bits of wood, Humphrey and I experimented with a handpress. One of Mr. Briggs' hobbies was to print poetry. We planned to give him a surprise by insinuating an obscene word here and there into the sonnet which lay set-up in type and ready to print when he returned from his office.

The sound of footsteps outside distracted our attention. Through the window we saw Uncle Talbot running up the drive. We heard the bell ring, then the murmur of an excited conversation between him and Mrs. Briggs on the porch. Humphrey leant out of the window to listen.

"Couldn't catch much," he said afterwards. "Something about 'must have been mad.' I think I heard your name too. Now they've gone indoors."

"Another dog I suppose," I said. "I wonder who it bit?"

"One of the Roper-Bassetts with luck," Humphrey said.

Incidents with mad dogs were a commonplace. Though curious, and a little uneasy, we returned to our intricate printing problem.

Twenty minutes later we saw Uncle Talbot running back down

the drive, followed at a slower pace by our *ayah*. She was crying. Obviously something had happened. We suspended work to discuss the possible shapes which death, disease or disaster might have taken, scaring one another pleasantly with our speculations.

The Influenza Epidemic, recently imported from Europe, was a topical bogey; it could be that. Or a fire in our bungalow? But then we should see the smoke. The parents of a boy I had once known in Kashmir had been trampled to death by a mad elephant; but that was improbable in Mukra where the elephants were of a more ceremonious breed.

Humphrey suggested a fresh outbreak of the Mutiny and the hypothesis caught our fancy. Certainly that must be it.

"Don't you see? Your uncle and the *ayah* have gone to fetch more food."

Nothing less would account for their unusual haste. And the *ayah*, as an Indian employee, must expect horrible mutilation—which would explain her tears. We visualised the studio in terms of a compromise between the beleaguered Fort at Lucknow and the Black Hole of Calcutta and we tested whether the handpress could be dragged across to barricade the door. But it was too heavy to move.

But probably, we concluded with a mixture of regret and relief, there was nothing exciting after all; merely some boring grown-up panic about a picnic. And we were wondering how to amuse ourselves next, when Mrs. Briggs came in.

A large untidy blonde who was always patient and affectionate with children, she looked as a rule both harassed and cheerful. Now she looked only harassed.

"Goodness what a mess you've made. You must clear it up before Daddy comes home." And then, "Listen, Paul, Scylla and Carrie. How would you like to stay the night here as a treat?"

"Oh yes, please. Oh yes, PLEASE," my sisters shouted. More cautious, I waited to hear what the snag was.

While the girls celebrated noisily, Mrs. Briggs spoke to me.

"You would like to, wouldn't you, Paul? And we would love it, wouldn't we, Humphrey?"

"But what's happened?"

"Your father and mother have been . . . well, taken ill. Unex-

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pectedly. Your uncle came over just now and we think it would be best if you all stayed here tonight, perhaps for a few days."

"Have they got hydrophobia?"

"No. That is . . ." Mrs. Briggs hesitated and gave me an odd look as if uncertain what more to say. "No, of course not. What an idea. Now there's no need to worry, Paul. Understand? Just go on with whatever you're doing till bedtime. I've sent the *ayah* to fetch all your pyjamas and things. Your uncle will come again soon and will give you any further news himself."

"Will he come again tonight?"

"Yes, I expect so."

However, Uncle Talbot didn't come. He *funked* it. "W-women do that sort of thing s-so much better," I can imagine him thinking. In any case he left the unwelcome task to Mrs. Briggs who led me by myself into the garden the next morning.

First she gave me the breath-taking news that I would soon be leaving Mukra with my uncle, to return with him to England.

"Scylla and Carrie too?" I asked, thus deferring her announcement of that further piece of news, which I dreaded, though I had already guessed it.

"No. They are staying on here. We shall bring them home with us when we leave later next year." She paused. And I waited, rather giddy, for what might come. She spoke very gently.

"There is something else I'm afraid I must tell you, Paul. I've not told the others this, except Humphrey, they're too young. But you're older, aren't you, Paul? And much braver? I'm afraid you've got to be brave, because what I have to say is very sad and very terrible . . ."

2

"What are their names?"

"I won't tell you."

"Go on, Ropey, *make* him tell!" urged the rest, standing round my bed in the last five minutes before the gong sounded for lights-out.

"Potty twins probably don't have names. They're a potty family. His father ran amok and his uncle showed the white feather."

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"How do you mean 'ran amok'?" piped a moon-faced youth whose name I forget but who was distinguished for asking silly questions.

"It's an expression they use in India—when elephants and things go mad."

"Did Potty's father go mad?" several cried.

"Must have. Shot his wife and then himself."

The statement was followed by an awed hush; was indeed perhaps felt to have exceeded the legitimate bounds of Potty-baiting.

"What's 'showing the white feather'?"—the moon-faced youth again.

"Funking the war. Being a coward and a traitor."

"Potty's uncle was a traitor!" This from a curly-haired cherub called Tommy Drew.

"No he wasn't," I sniffed.

"Oh yes he was. *And a spy!*"

Roper-Bassett's technique in an argument was as subtle, and forceful, as a mallet. He drove the points home with his knuckles on my skull which happened, at the moment, to be immovably wedged between his knees.

It is rather sad how little good my friendship with Elsie did me with her brother Cyril. I suppose, at such times, I must have hated him, but I have always been a poor hater, ready to believe I am in the wrong, the other chap in the right. The real result of the persecution was to turn me against Scylla and Carrie, to make me despise my family and myself and to adopt a cringing humility in the face of superior strength. I became a Traditionalist, accepting without a struggle an order of things in which Roper-Bassett was invincibly the hammer, I the nail. In due course Chilmarsh boasted no more ardent scragger of new squits, and especially of those with sisters, than Paul Pot.

At least, I reflected on this occasion, which would have been about half-way through my first term, the full horror of the twins' names was still undisclosed. Cawthrock's sister was known to be called Laetitia—whence the nickname 'Tits' which clung to him, to his great discomfort, through his schooldays. But his spirit was less abject than mine and though small, he was seldom physically attacked, having proved himself as fierce and sharp toothed as a mongoose.

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Moreover he could bite shrewdly with his tongue. Now he came gallantly, if verbally, to my defence.

"Well anyway, Roper-Bassett, Potty's father was wounded in the war and mine was killed. Yours wasn't either."

"Snubs and sucks to you. My father *was* wounded. That's why he was sent out to train the troops in India. . . ."

But at that moment Freddy Paddington, in white-faced panic, ran into the dormitory shouting, "The war has started up again! The Germans have landed at Easthampton!"

The evening Potty-bait was suspended, as he continued, "I overheard old Horrors tell Matron to expect the worst. The school will have to be moved tomorrow. Things are damned serious."

With his brushed-back hair, high forehead and general appearance of precocious urbanity, Freddy was the arch rumour-monger of my time at Chilmarsh, with a great gift for convincing us, and himself, that what he said was true. His father being in the Cabinet gave him oracular authority and perhaps explained why his reputation never suffered when his rumours and theories were disproved. Today, I believe, Freddy is in the Cabinet himself.

That evening he really terrified us, rushing out, as the gong sounded, to spread the alarm through other dormitories. In ours Roper-Bassett, the dormitory captain, quickly switched off the lights. We crowded round the window, peering anxiously towards the coast. All was calm out at sea, but a rocket flashed unaccountably across the sky where Easthampton lay behind the headland.

"A star-shell," Roper-Bassett said. "They always have them in landings. A battle's going on all right. Better get back to bed now."

With chattering teeth, we obeyed. In the dark Cawthrock and I fearfully discussed England's chances of survival while, near us, Tommy Drew blubbed uncontrollably. His mother was Vesta Swann, the musical comedy star, his step-father of the moment a racehorse-owning brewer. The pair were on holiday in the Riviera and Tommy imagined they would already have been taken prisoner or shot by the Germans who must have captured France before arriving on the South Coast. We ignored, in the emergency, the usual after-lights-out danger from Mr. Horrocks—what he called the evening Reign of Terror—when he prowled round in sneakers to catch us talk-

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ing. His absence now was taken as further evidence that the worst had happened. Visualising ourselves spitted on German bayonets, we cowered under the bedclothes and listened for sounds of gunfire. Even the school peacock was silent; perhaps they were already at the walls and had slit his throat. . . .

In the morning, though a maid came in as usual to wake us, we hardly dared to leave the dormitory, and still expected to find clanking Uhlans in the corridors when we went for a cold bath. Probably the temperature of the water allayed our fears, for the panic ended as abruptly as it had begun, and was, by common consent, never referred to again.

The shadow of the war lay heavily on us. We were vague what it had been about, taking our line chiefly from the *Punch* albums which effectively simplified the issues into a conflict between Good and Bad, St. George and the Dragon, School Hero versus Bully. Although we knew the ordeal had tested the manhood of our fathers' generation to the utmost, had indeed been so serious that its very mention could change the tone of grown-up voices, we were encouraged to see in it more of Romance than of Tragedy by the flood of popular war literature which fed our craving for violent fantasy. The intrepid white-hunter henceforth spent his nights crawling across no-man's-land, to throttle scores of Boche, with his bare hands, or slit their throats with a jack-knife, like a character in one of Sapper's stories.

Men were divided into those who had been 'in the war' and those who, for whatever reason, had not, the former being cut off from the rest by 'what they had been through.' Crucified and risen again, they had never been quite the same since, though the agony seemed to have affected them in different ways, twisting some, purifying others.

Stinky Mellor, the most popular master at Chilmarsh, was one of the purified. In our four years there Cawthrock and I must have tramped hundreds of miles on Sunday walks clinging to the leather-patched elbows of his tweed jacket, while he puffed at his pipe and told us how, as a Captain in the Royal Engineers, he had been thrice wounded, twice gassed and once deafened by an exploding mine. Nor did he object when the nickname slipped out, understanding

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the entirely affectionate impulse behind the lapse. For he was that rare, and rather touching, thing, a prep. school master with a genuine love of boys and their ways. He, like no one else, could fix up torch bulbs in a desk, to go on when it opened, or knew how to fold paper darts so that they glided with the grace of swans. Even to the sharpening of pencils he brought a deft and patient craftsmanship constantly in demand. A quiet, gentle-humoured and rather melancholy man who, in an earlier age, could have been a monk illuminating manuscripts, I think of him with affection for encouraging—instead of, as was usual, punishing me—for the marginal drawings and decorated capitals with which, then and at Borcham, I habitually embellished all my school books.

He first came to Chilmarsh a year or two before the war, leaving to join up and returning afterwards. Once when Cawthrock and I were teasing him about his baldness he led us to a 1914 School Group, one of the many hanging unregarded on the walls.

"Well, you can see I had plenty of hair in those days."

He had indeed; and a heavy moustache. But my interest focused, rather, on another master in the photograph, a scowling and bearded young man with shaven upper lip.

"But I knew *him* in Mukra, sir!" I said, pointing. "He's called Mr. Stormbush. Was *he* a master at Chilmarsh?"

"Stormbush? I can't think of anyone . . ." Stinky Mellor examined the Group. "Ah, *that* bloke. Yes, he was a German or Austrian who came to teach languages one term. I forget his name."

"The name's underneath, only spelt in a funny way," I said. "STURMBUSCH. I'm certain he's the same one I met."

"Oh? What was he doing out there. Teaching?"

"No, he . . . That is, yes, sort of . . ." I hardly liked to allude to the nature of our meeting.

But Stinky Mellor was wrinkling his lined face in an effort to recapture some distant memory lost, along with much else from his youth, in the trenches.

"I remember now. Yes, of course. Old Sturmbusch. I believe Mr. Horrocks' sister knew him—she helped to run the school before the war. He wasn't a success. A very rum cove; a bit spooky. Claimed to be in touch with the Devil. We called him The Spy."

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"Gosh, sir, a spy!"

"Well, that was our joke. But there was a lot of talk about spies just then. Now I think of it, I've an idea I once heard he'd become quite famous suddenly. Started a new religion and got himself arrested or something. I think I read about it in a newspaper when I was in hospital. . . ."

"Why did he leave Chilmarsh, sir? Because he was German?"

"No, I don't imagine Mr. Horrocks would have minded that so much. His own mother came from Germany, you know. I believe there was some unpleasantness—Mr. Horrocks or his sister caught him nosing about in their old photograph albums in the study. But look here, I'm not paid to stand gossiping. You two are supposed to be in prep.!"

And he chivvied us along the passage while Cawthrock said, "Jolly super moustache you had then, sir. Bet you couldn't grow one like it now. . . ."

Mr. Hobbs, on the other hand, was one who had been twisted. He too was popular and started with the advantage of having the same surname as our cricketing hero Jack, though he disclaimed, rather irritably, any blood relationship. He had fought in the ranks, where he lost an arm but won the M.M.—which was, we gathered, not quite so good as winning the M.C., for which you needed to be an officer. He called himself an Anarchist and wrote poetry which he read aloud when none of the other staff were present. The poems didn't rhyme and their metre was not as stirring, somehow, as the poems of Sir Henry Newbolt which we learnt by heart, but they contained many powerful oaths and exciting, if unintelligible, new words.

I had a more personal reason for liking Mr. Hobbs. He told me that, while battling in the trenches, he had read and admired an article by Uncle Talbot attacking the war. My loyalty to my uncle was greatly strained by his Pacifism, of which I could not but feel ashamed. Mr. Hobbs reinstated him in my esteem.

"Believe me," he said, "it needed more real guts to stand back and protest, than to rush into the slaughter with the rest of the woolly-minded sheep."

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Unfortunately he was less enthusiastic about my uncle's travel reminiscences. The volume on Persia and India was published after I had been at Chilmarsh about a year and was generally praised for its fine use of language. But Mr. Hobbs called it too damned precious and added that with so much to be put right at home, it was a pity my uncle wasted his talent on rubbishy travelogues.

"Your m-maths master is a p-prig and you can tell him from me to mind his own b-bloody b-business," Uncle Talbot spluttered furiously when I mentioned Hobbs' remark in the holidays. I was amazed that my uncle should be so put out. The compliments paid to his book had appeared to give him no pleasure at all and yet this small criticism stung him out of all proportion. But I did not have the chance to pass his message back to Mr. Hobbs who had left, in the meantime, to join the staff of an extraordinary new school for both boys and girls, where no one was beaten and where everyone did pretty much as they pleased.

"Imagine leaving Chilmarsh for a place like that!" Mr. Horrocks commented the first morning of term after Prayers. We all laughed scornfully. Still, the idea had something, we felt—if it wasn't for the girls.

Mr. Horrocks himself, as he often lamented, had not been 'in the war.' A strained heart, too old. . . . The precise reason was never made clear. But he shared our romantic obsession with the recent conflict, which he saw, as indeed he saw most things in life, as only a more serious version of cricket. In every predicament a straight bat was the best defence against slings, arrows, or whatever else came. On Sunday evenings he read war stories aloud to the assembled school. His favourite concerned an aristocratic cricketer whose slackness in dropping a catch against Australia lost the Ashes for England, but who was given the chance to make good again in the trenches, where he caught enemy grenades as they came whizzing over and tossed them quickly back.

"A deuced plucky thing to do, don't you agree?" Mr. Horrocks used to comment.

"Oh yes, sir, it jolly well was," we agreed.

* * * * *

John Verney

But I have drifted ahead and must return a moment to the end of my first term, to one of those uneasy interludes when the two worlds of school and of home overlapped.

The term, like every subsequent one, finished with a kind of swarm fever, a mounting state of hysteria of which the train journey to London was the ultimate paroxysm. Each of the last few days was ascribed, by tradition, its particular name and custom. Bash-Hat Sunday; New-Squit Monday; Quis-Ego Tuesday. And then the day of departure itself. Glorious Wednesday. . . .

"No more Latin, no more French. . . ."

The deafening clamour broke out as the three bus loads drove from Chilmarsh to Easthampton Station on a grilling July early-afternoon. Though the inside of the special coach was at furnace heat, the boys sung, shouted and ragged tirelessly for the next two hours. Drew fainted, and was revived with lemonade powder. Unnoticed, I was myself sick out of a window. Mr. Horrocks, a perennial schoolboy at heart, always accompanied the school train, and enjoyed the racket more than anyone, beating time with his green pork-pie hat while we sang the school song.

"We are the boys of Chilmarsh School

If you think we're downhearted you must be a fool. . . ."

He had written the words and composed the music himself, so Freddy Paddington maintained. And I can believe it.

But at length Victoria Station was reported in sight and the noise abated. Copies of *Tiger Tim* or the *B.O.P.* were stuffed into jacket pockets. Three-legged stools, pipe-stands, dumb waiters and other carpentered trophies, too bulky to be packed in the trunks, were lifted down from the rack by their proud makers.

There were no other schools on the train today and the phalanx of Chilmarsh parents stood steadfastly on the platform against the throng of departing passengers. Carried almost bodily out of the coach by the rush, I found myself within a few yards of Uncle Talbot, the twins, and my Aunt Cicely. The latter's hat and dress, reminiscent in style of Queen Mary's, were conspicuous for their faded magnificence.

Scylla and Carrie had arrived with the Briggses from India the week

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before. Their curly fair heads suddenly recalled a past so heavily overlaid with intense experience that I could hardly believe it still belonged to me. The twins, excitable as ever, spotted me first.

"There's Paul! There's Paul!" they yelled, jumping up and down.

Adjacent parents turned to smile and Roper-Bassett, pushing past, gave me a contemptuous glance. I saw him join his father who seemed to be alone—to my relief. I had no wish to meet Elsie ever again.

"Why are you wearing that funny hat?" the twins cried next, pointing at the straw boater, in my case only mildly bashed.

"Don't talk so *loud*," I hissed, removing it.

"Good gracious child," my aunt said in a penetrating voice.

"What a hideous haircut!"

My uncle dabbed the sweat off his forehead. "Hallo, P-Paul. We've been w-waiting on this d-damnedly hot station for t-twenty minutes. Have a g-good first term?"

"Yes, thanks, Uncle Talbot."

He made a show of cordiality, but looked irritable and nervous. He loathed small-talk and dreaded getting involved in it with other parents, many of whom he knew quite well and would, in different circumstances, have been pleased to meet. In future, when possible, he shirked these arrival and departure scenes and sent his butler.

The door of the luggage van had jammed and there was a long delay before our trunks could be unloaded. The sun beat down through the glass roof and the station staff shouted bad-temperedly. Reunited family groups stood about on the otherwise deserted platform, the mothers repairing melted make-up or eyeing one another maliciously. One or two obviously found the sight of my aunt exceedingly droll. The fathers, like my uncle, seemed anxious to avoid all contact with anyone, or made what they could of the Southern Railway's incompetence as a conversational topic. Mr. Horrocks, unperturbed by the heat, passed from group to group, chatting rather obsequiously with parents while he patted their sons on the head.

Aunt Cicely, however, appeared to enjoy every moment of this protracted hanging-about and kept irritating my uncle by asking him who people *were*.

John Verney

"I know so many of them by sight. Isn't that Vesta Swann, Talbie? You know, the . . ."

"Yes, yes," he said grumpily, "of course it is."

"I've recognised two girls I was at school with, though they haven't recognised me. Julia Manning. She married a man called Cawthrock who was killed in the war. And Agnes Monteith. She's Agnes Marylebone now. Do you know a boy called Cawthrock and one—I suppose his name would be Paddington?"

I nodded glumly.

"Are they nice? Are they friends of yours?"

"They're all right," I said without enthusiasm.

I had realised with misgivings that no other sisters were on the station and that mine were therefore, in this very important matter, unique. Perhaps their presence broke some time-honoured Chilmarsh convention. I tried to look as if they, and my aunt, were merely tiresome strangers who had attached themselves to me but whom I was too polite to walk away from. Not that my answers to the twins' insistent questions about school life were in the least polite. At length I told them bluntly to shut up and stood forlornly thinking of the past term, of the many to follow, and then, more cheerfully, of the holidays ahead.

Mr. Horrocks, I saw, was with the nearest group and I hoped we might yet escape from the platform before our turn came.

An absurd argument had started between my aunt and uncle about some pre-war acquaintance who had been, or might have been, a connection by marriage with the cousin of somebody or other they thought they now recognised on the platform.

"Don't be so silly, Talbie. Of course Vera was engaged to Roger. It was at Christmas, don't you remember? Because she broke it off, and sent his ring back to him stuffed into a mincepie. . . ."

My aunt had a governessy way of treating her elder brother, which got on his nerves. Her sentences often began, "Don't be so silly, Talbie."

But Uncle Talbot, losing interest in the impulsive Vera, scowled about him.

"G-God, what a hard-faced collection!" he muttered. "Isn't it simply g-ghastly to think that in thirty years all these eager j-jolly

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little boys will be as corrupt and awful looking as their f-fathers. No one ever seems to be able to escape from his family." He spoke with real bitterness.

"Don't be so silly, Talbic. Besides, boys always take after their mothers." My aunt herself was angry now.

"No man takes after his mother, that's his tragedy. Every daughter does. That's hers. Or whatever it is. Sometimes, when he's young, a boy *l-looks* as if he will, but always, by the time he's about forty, he's become just his f-father over again, only usually w-worse."

"I wonder which parent Paul will take after then." There was an odd note of fury in my aunt's voice.

My uncle coloured. "W-what precisely do you m-mean by that?" They glared at one another in silence. Then she nodded warningly towards me and recovered her temper. "Anyway, all the fathers here seem *particularly* nice. For instance, who's that good-looking man—I would guess he's a Guards Officer—making a fuss with the Station Master about the luggage? I'm sure I've seen his face somewhere."

My uncle glanced over his shoulder, and turned abruptly back.

"Harry Roper-B-Bassett. I've been avoiding him for the past half-hour."

"Major Roper-Bassett! I didn't know he had a son at Chilmarsh, did you?"

"Y-yes. But the boy's leaving soon."

My uncle stroked his forehead and looked flustered.

"Do *you* know the Roper-Bassett boy?" my aunt asked me sharply. "What's he like?"

"Oh, all right."

But Mr. Horrocks was upon us.

"Well, Potty, you're a good sort of uncle to have I must say, never coming down to take your nephew out once! I expect the young man has grown up a bit since you last saw him, eh?" and he patted me on the back, while I grinned sheepishly. He lifted his green pork-pie hat vaguely at my aunt and Uncle Talbot introduced them.

"You've m-met my sister before, I think. She was with us that time in Austria, at Gastein."

John Verney

"But of course. How do you do, Miss Pot?" He shook hands awkwardly. "Forgive me not recognising you. . . . We school-masters meet so many old faces, our memories get cluttered up. Dear me, Bad Gastein. . . . What a lot of water has flowed under the bridge since then, eh? Awfully glad to have your nephew with us. The makings of a cricketer, if he can be persuaded to keep that bat straight. . . ." To her astonishment, he batted a few imaginary strokes.

"And are these his little sisters?" He bent down and leered at the two girls, the attempt at benevolence making him look as if he intended to bite them. Scylla's face immediately puckered.

"And what are the young ladies' names?" He addressed the question to me.

"This one is Scylla and that one Carrie, sir." The heat of the station had become almost unbearable.

"No, it isn't," Carrie said defiantly, "I'm only called Carrie for short. My real name is Car-ib-dis."

"Charybdis?" Horrocks repeated incredulously. "What? Do you mean like Scylla and Charybdis?"

"They're unusual names for a girl," my aunt hastily said. "But their mother had rather unconventional ideas and actually the names are quite pretty, don't you think, Mr. Horrocks? I mean, if one doesn't. . . ."

But Scylla burst into tears, and Carrie put out her tongue.

"Carrie, that was very rude!" My aunt slapped her and Carrie began to cry too.

"They're very tired. The heat, you know. . . ."

"Dear me, it's my fault. I'm afraid I'm not used to little girls." Mr. Horrocks looked about him desperately. "Well, I must be going. Delighted to have seen you again, Miss Pot. I shall be writing to my sister soon. She'll be so interested that we've met. . . ."

"I don't think I knew you had a sister," said Aunt Cicely.

Uncle Talbot shrugged his shoulders in a gesture of despair. The situation had become too complicated; for Mr. Horrocks also.

"Oh, there's Lady Marylebone. If you'll excuse me I must have a word with her about Freddy before she leaves."

Raising his hat nervously a couple of times, he nodded to my uncle, gave my head a playful cuff, and hurried off.

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"What a dreadfully common little man!" my aunt said loudly before he was properly out of ear-shot.

"Th-thank G-God there's the porter at last with P-Paul's trunk. . . ."

3

On the last afternoon, the following term's Common Entrance candidates sat doing extra French, an impot for having failed some test paper. It was Quis-Ego Tuesday and from other classrooms the buzzing sound reached us of that hectic auction, when assorted treasures changed hands many times, to be finally stored in their new owner's desk as a nucleus of wealth with which to start again after the holidays. Cawthrock and I had begun a surreptitious game of noughts and crosses when the door opened. Stinky Mellor looked round from chalking a list of irregular verbs on the blackboard.

"Yes, what is it, Drew?"

"Please, sir, Mr. Horrocks sent me to say he wants to see Pot in the study."

I would have welcomed any other interruption but a chilling summons to 'the study' meant only one thing. Stinky Mellor nodded permission and gave me a quick understanding smile. Pink-faced and my heart in my boots, I stood up to leave.

"Here's some blotch," Cawthrock whispered.

Outside, my slow footsteps echoed mournfully down the passage, the blotch, adjusted in haste, contributing a faint tell-tale rustle. I searched my conscience frantically for an outstanding crime, to have ready the exculpatory lie, but could think of none—except, perhaps, the noughts and crosses. Sometimes it almost seemed as if Mr. Horrocks had an ubiquitous eye for delinquency.

In the hall the distinctive prep. school smell of lavatory disinfectant and floor polish, always at its strongest there, turned my inside to jelly. A group of new squits in an adjacent classroom, whose final scragging I had organised the night before, spotted my destination. As I gently knocked on the study door they edged nearer, offering revengeful jibes and preparing to bolt if Mr. Horrocks himself appeared.

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No answer came from within. I thought I could hear voices. A hopeful sign? Very quietly, to avoid infuriating him more than necessary, I entered. The study's habitual reek of a Third Class Smoker turned the jelly to water. On train journeys since I have often relived the weird scene which followed.

The lights were not yet lit and the room, on this March afternoon, was in semi-darkness. Mr. Horrocks stood against the rain-spattered window. The high-backed easy chair, over whose arm I had so often bent, blocked my path. A bad sign, that. He enjoyed watching his victim push the chair into the central space.

"You s-sent f-for me, sir?"

In the past year or two I had developed a stammer, especially in moments of stress.

"Ha, Funkpot, come in."

At least his tone was mildly reassuring. He waved towards the chair. My spirits sank, soaring again with his next words. "An old friend of yours would like to meet you." A small elderly woman sat forward to greet me. In the dusky light I didn't recognise her at first; and then, with the surge of relief, could have embraced her.

"Well, Paul, I expect you've forgotten me after so many years. Gracious child, how you've shot up!"

"B-but of course I haven't f-forgotten you, Miss Horrocks. I'm v-very g-glad to see you." I shook her hand enthusiastically.

"Hallo, you never used to stammer like that. You reminded me absurdly of your uncle. How is he?"

There was something different about her speech, I noticed. It was feebler and huskier than I remembered. She even sounded tearful, if such weakness could be imagined.

"V-very well, thank you, Miss Horrocks."

"And the twins?"

"V-very well, thank you."

"They must be big girls by now. Do they live with your aunt?"

"Yes, in Woking."

"Woking! Of course. How beautifully peaceful that sounds! Lucky children. What happens about lessons?"

"My aunt teaches them herself at present."

"Isn't that pretty unsatisfactory?" Mr. Horrocks boomed, but

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with an unfamiliar, and unconvincing, note of geniality in his voice. "Has she any qualifications? I mean, I should have thought she was too busy."

"W-well, sir, she hasn't a lot else to do, but of c-course I expect they'll be g-going to a proper school when they're older."

I rather resented the implied criticism of my aunt. For some time, having overcome my earlier fear, I had been growing increasingly fond of her, appreciating the impulsively generous nature behind the forbidding, often harsh, externals. In my later teens and early twenties I was to spend hours among my friends analysing her, as we called it. Now I added, showing more spirit than usual, "You k-know, sir, my aunt is really awfully c-clever."

Mr. Horrocks muttered something about experience as a teacher being of more importance. But his sister said, "Yes, yes, I'm sure she does it very well. And do you live at Woking too in the holidays?"

"P-part of the time. I stay a lot with Uncle Talbot."

"I was sad to hear of your grandfather's death, but that must leave your aunt freer. And of course he was quite old."

I inclined my head in a vaguely sorrowful gesture and asked—"Have you b-been in England long, Miss Horrocks?"

"Only two or three weeks. My brother has found lodgings for me in Easthampton until—until I decide what I'm going to do. I had rather hoped . . . But of course there's no room in the school in term time, I do see that."

Mr. Horrocks, still at the window, spoke impatiently. "Jammed at present, my dear. Besides, I felt that in your present state of health, the noise . . ." He strode towards the light switch, while Miss Horrocks, with a trace of her old sarcasm, said, "Oh I'm not complaining. I have a charming little room—in a nice policeman's house. Ideal for me. And with a view of the sea."

The study light was feeble, but even so it revealed, with dramatic suddenness, the change in Miss Horrocks since I had last seen her. She was so much *smaller*; a shrivelled yellow leaf of a woman, almost a death's head with the skin puckered over the jaw and with hollow purplish rings round the eye sockets. The eye rims were inflamed. I was amazed, and a little repelled. What could have happened?

Typhus, Malaria, Yellow Fever . . . ? Probably my feelings showed in my face for she said. "I was very ill for a year after you and your uncle left. Perhaps you heard. Then I recovered and hoped to stay on in Mukra. I always liked it there. But my health got worse again and Colonel Bell advised me to come home at once. He's leaving too, I believe. You remember Colonel Bell?"

"Oh yes, rather. He was jolly decent."

"Yes, he was a good friend. And they're not so common."

Gaining confidence, I asked after other acquaintances, less from real interest than to prolong the novel experience of chatting in the study in such a fashion. I had to stand unnaturally still though; the blotch crinkled audibly whenever I moved. Mr. Horrocks contributed an occasional remark. He seemed glad of my presence and after a few minutes made it an excuse to withdraw.

"Well, I'll leave you to have a chat with old Funkpot. I must just stroll round. The school gets uppish on the last day. But don't overtire yourself. Why not show him that album?" He pointed towards his desk, explaining to me, "We were looking through it before you came. My sister often kept a record of our holidays when she lived with me before the war. This has some photos of your people. We met them once in Austria."

"Oh yes, sir. I've heard my uncle and aunt mention it, sir. My grandfather and my parents were there too, weren't they, sir?"

I was all out to oblige, to be bright and interesting. Even my stammer improved.

"You seem to be suddenly pleased with yourself, don't you? Didn't find quite what you expected in here, eh?"

Whatever his limitations, Mr. Horrocks knew boys. I grinned fatuously.

As he opened the door a dozen pairs of feet could be heard scuttling across the hall.

"Rattigan! . . . Ashley minor! . . . Harper!" he shouted, in more accustomed tones. "Come here! What are you doing in the hall? You know perfectly well . . ."

The door closed behind him. Oh yes, there would be a last reign of terror tonight. But not for me, not for me. I sighed with the sheer pleasure of it.

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"Stand nearer, Paul, so that I needn't talk so loud."

Forgetting the album, Miss Horrocks leant back in the chair. She rested one hand on the sacrificial arm, the other fingered a brooch on her bosom. I remembered the brooch suddenly, the old dragon-fly, and how I had used to stare at it to annoy her.

"School's done you good, Paul. Made more of a man of you. I always knew it would. You like it, don't you?" But she spoke wearily and obviously didn't much care whether I liked school or not.

"Oh yes, rather, Miss Horrocks. It's super fun."

"You ought to be grateful to me really. Are you?"

"Yes, of course, Miss Horrocks."

"I don't suppose you really are. You were rather an ungrateful little boy, sometimes. People never are grateful. All my old pupils in Mukra went off to school in England. There was no one left in the end. I wasn't sorry. You don't get the same type out there nowadays. Many of the officers weren't even gentlemen. That was one of the reasons I decided to leave, though of course I had to in any case. Colonel Bell said he wouldn't give me a year if I stayed. He thought I'd have a better chance here. It's not easy, Paul, starting again in England at my age, when you've been ill. . . ."

"No, I suppose not, Miss Horrocks."

Her talk was inconsequential and blurred. She confused words and ran them together, like Uncle Talbot when he came home after a party. But of course Miss Horrocks hadn't been to a party. I didn't know what to make of her. The interview had begun to embarrass me. On the whole I would have preferred to get back to Stinky Mellor's class.

She had closed her eyes—as far as I could tell, because the ceiling light cast a deep shadow off the brim of her hat over the upper half of her haggard face. She was still very ill, I supposed.

She meandered on, the sentences more disjointed than I shall make them here. "At first, when I decided to come back to England, I thought London would be best. I knew several people, parents of children I had taught in Mukra, who are living in London. I thought they might want me to coach their children separately or even in a class. I wrote to them. But they weren't very hopeful, or helpful. Some of them, like Viola Roper-Bassett, didn't even answer. Was

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Elsie out there in your time? I forget. My memory is all mixed up nowadays."

"B-but, Miss Horrocks, of course I knew her. Don't you remember . . ."

But she wasn't listening and seemed rather to be speaking thoughts aloud. The monologue continued.

"The Briggses too . . . I thought they might help . . . They live in London now, you know. Do you remember the Briggses? He ran the *Gazette*. I worked for him sometimes, only no one was supposed to know. I needed money, more than people understood. . . ."

"Oh yes, I remember the Briggses very well, Miss Horrocks. Scylla and Carrie and I stayed with them, after . . . after . . ."

Miss Horrocks appeared to have dosed off with her mouth slightly open. But she had heard me and her mind abruptly shifted gear, back from the past to the present.

"After? After what?" she snapped, sitting forward so that her face moved fully into the light. She had the same, small, enraged-animal brown eyes as her brother, their only physical similarity. The eyes glittered malevolently at me and, in a moment, all the old fear of her was reawakened. India came back in a rush.

"After . . . well, after my f-father and m-mother died. We stayed with the Briggses for Christmas. Then I travelled home with my uncle. . . ."

She relaxed, the gear changing into reverse again.

"Ah yes, your father and mother. Robert and Hilda Pot. . . . Robert and Hilda Pot. And of course Harry Roper-Bassett. Dear me, that afternoon . . . how long ago was it? The meeting of the Mukra Amateur Operatic Society, in Viola's house. About twenty of us. Elsie was there too, I can't think why. Perhaps she had a part in the chorus. She was very bored, poor pet. And we were all growing more and more bad tempered in the heat, rehearsing and arguing who was to play what. Talbot and Harry quarrelled because they both wanted to play Nanky Poo opposite your mother, I remember. And then Elsie, who had been sitting silent in a corner of the room for a long time, suddenly laughed out loud. We had quite forgotten her. Viola asked crossly what the joke was. 'Oh,

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I was just thinking of something which Paul told me.' 'Well, come on, let's all hear it. We need some light relief.' I think it was Talbot who said that. So everyone stopped talking to listen. Then Elsie said, 'Paul's father says Mummy rides a man like a horse. Isn't that funny?' You could have heard a pin drop. No one knew what to do. And then Viola said, 'Very funny, but I think he must have been referring to Hilda.' Your mother—I can see it now—just walked straight out of the room and Harry Roper-Bassett walked out after her. . . ."

I stood, shifting from foot to foot. The blotch rustled. It had begun to scratch abominably. I hardly understood a word of the anecdote, let alone its point. But then I had never been able to make sense of all the other isolated references to the Mukra tragedy which from time to time had cropped up. Like rocks in the sea they were presumably all connected underneath, but it was hard as yet to see how.

"You know it was very wicked of you, Paul, to repeat what your father had said. If he did say it. It sounds more like one of Talbot's remarks. . . ."

"Well, you see, Miss Horrocks, Elsie and I were in the garden that morning and Elsie had said that her father had said . . ."

But Miss Horrocks, I dimly perceived, was too concerned in trying to shift something off her own chest to be bothered with whatever might be on mine.

"We are all wicked sometimes, Paul. All of us. I'm afraid I may have been to blame too, before all that happened. I told something to Mr. Briggs for his paper I shouldn't have told him. He put it in the gossip column. . . . You see, Paul, it's so difficult sometimes to know how to act. You think you're doing the best and playing the game. And then afterwards people say unkind things until you begin to wonder whether perhaps you really were playing the game as much as you thought you had been. You even begin to wonder whether the Devil . . ."

A deeply masculine shout outside the study door heralded my headmaster's return and for perhaps the only time at Chilmarsh I was thankful to see him.

"Sorry to leave you so long. Caught the Lower Fourth throwing

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ink darts. There'll be a few sore tails going home tomorrow. Had a nice talk with Funkpot about old times? Did you show him that album?"

Her brother's presence seemed to restore Miss Horrocks to a state more nearly approaching normal, though she answered him in a nervous flustered voice.

"No, my dear. We have just been quietly chatting. Let's look at it now."

She rose from the chair and we moved to the desk. Mr. Horrocks turned on a standard lamp and opened the album's red leather cover.

On the title page the words *BAD GASTEIN 15TH MARCH-30TH APRIL 1912* were elaborately inscribed, the rustic capital letters, tinted in water colour, being further embellished with sprigs of edelweiss. I recognised my old governess' handiwork.

"Oh, I say, jolly good lettering, sir," I said.

"Rather the sort of stuff you like to do yourself, eh? She was a clever old thing, was my sister. We had some good times together in those days."

He talked of his sister in a detached way, as if she was not quite with us and placed an arm gruffly round her shoulders. The display of affection, something about the whole present situation, made me acutely uncomfortable. I felt I must at all costs talk.

"Oh, I say, sir, 15th March to 30th April. Jolly long Easter hols in those days, sir."

"Um, does sound longer than usual. Why was that I wonder?"

Miss Horrocks, who had been silent, spoke up again. "Don't you remember that the school had mumps? You caught it too and we had to close at half-term. That was why we went to Austria." She went on talking, fast and often unintelligibly. "Oh dear, Bad Gastein 1912. Fourteen years ago already. I had my thirty-ninth birthday in the hotel—on April 24th—and Talbot gave us champagne in my honour. But I'm afraid Talbot really liked young Mrs. Pot best. She had a birthday too. She was only twenty-five. Don't you remember when——"

"Yes, yes, Emily," Mr. Horrocks interrupted. "Let's look through it."

Evidently she had kept a journal of the Austrian holiday and had

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transcribed a short dated account of each day's happenings into the album when the picture postcards and snaps were stuck in later. She began, haltingly, to read the commentary aloud.

"'15th March. Arrived at Adlerhof. Owned by cousins of our mother called Sturmbusch. The son a student—very anti-English. X marks my room, with a view of Gross Glockner.' Oh, what a lovely room that was. 'Hotel almost empty apart from a few foreigners but an English family called Pot is expected to arrive the day after tomorrow. We wonder if, by any chance, they are related to the two Pot boys Ernest was at school with and one of whom—Talbot—very nice—came to be coached by father eight or nine years ago.'"

The rest of the page was filled with further views of Gastein.

"'17th March,'" she read on. "'They are the same Pots! The whole family and Robert Pot's young wife from Barbados (I think). Not coloured at all. Pots as delighted to see us as we them. . . .'"

A group taken by Miss Horrocks the same evening showed my grandfather and aunt chatting to Mr. Horrocks on the Hotel steps in the background, with my mother, father and Uncle Talbot posed in front. My father, martial in bearing and dressed in formal tweeds, looked disgusted at being snapped at all, but my uncle, with an arm through my mother's, was obviously in great form. He wore a light suit, a straw boater and sniffed at a carnation in his buttonhole.

"Oh, your uncle was so funny sometimes," Miss Horrocks said.

The 18th March, which lasted for two whole pages, recorded the joint party setting off on a picnic, at the picnic, returning from the picnic. . . . Once or twice I thought I recognised, in the photos, a surly dark-bearded youth who seemed to be with them, but in the background.

"Oh, how well I remember that funny old hat," Miss Horrocks exclaimed at intervals. And her brother, who was puffing at his pipe, chuckled once or twice at some forgotten item of his own wardrobe. I was still too young to share this species of pleasure and, stifling a yawn, groaned inwardly at the number of pages still to be gone through. Even French verbs were better than this. But the tea gong ought to sound soon.

"'19th March,'" Miss Horrocks continued. "'Poor Robert Pot has been recalled suddenly. We shall miss his quiet humour. But the others,

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luckily, intend to stay for six weeks.' Why did Robert leave, can you remember? Was it to do with the war?"

Here, at least, was a chance for me to say something.

"Oh no, it couldn't have been that. The war didn't start until August the next year. *Actually*, I did once hear that my father quarrelled with Uncle Talbot and went off in a huff."

"My dear child, how can you possibly have heard anything of the sort? You weren't born until years later."

"Oh, much less than that, Miss Horrocks," I corrected her, showing, as boys will when they want to assert themselves in grown-up discussion, a cocky sort of exactitude for irrelevant detail. "Actually I was born on February 5th, 1913. About nine months later."

A roll of thunder sounded in the direction of Easthampton. A few sodden footballers ran past the window on their way indoors. They must have been able to see me in the study, chatting with Mr. Horrocks on equal terms, for all the world like a visiting parent. I looked forward to recounting my experiences at tea. The peacock, excited by the boys or by the approaching storm, began to scream. When it had finished the study seemed very quiet.

Miss Horrocks stared silently at the album. Her brother stared thoughtfully at me.

"You always mean well, Funkpot"—there was thunder too in his voice—"and that is about the most damning thing one can say of anyone. Just *try* sometimes not to speak simply for the sake of hearing your own voice. I've told you before."

I quailed. We were no longer on equal terms.

"I'm s-sorry, sir. I j-just thought . . ."

The gong sounded. His manner, to my abject relief, became friendly again, almost conciliatory. He took my arm and accompanied me to the door.

"My sister hasn't been very well, but she'll soon be herself again. All she needs is an interest. It's done her good to see you. She's extremely fond of your family. You might mention that to your aunt, too."

I had the odd, and unprecedented, impression that, in some obscure way, my headmaster was asking me a favour. His next remark made the nature of the favour a fraction less obscure.

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"You know, I think your aunt would do well to consider a governess for your sisters. Children learn better from someone outside the family. Well, cut along to your tea now."

"Yes, sir. Thank you, sir."

"Goodbye, Miss Horrocks." She was seated again, out of sight in the chair and did not reply.

THE TRANSATLANTIC REVIEW

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A Divorce of Lovers

BY MAY SARTON

1

Now these two warring halves are to be parted,
And the long struggle to anneal, come through
To where divided love could grow whole-hearted
Is given over. Now we are cut in two.
Never will you and I meet face to face,
Never again, you say, upon this ground
So our last battle was a special grace—
An ether to anaesthetize the wound.
When we are conscious, we shall understand
Better perhaps just how it can be done,
How surgeons crack apart the tight-clasped hand,
What scalpel can unknot love at the bone.
The surgeon's name is Reason. We shall see
How Reason operates on Poetry.

2

I shall not see the end of this unweaving.
I shall lie dead in any narrow ditch
Before they are unwoven, love and grieving,
And our lives separated stitch by stitch.
I shall be dead before this task is done,
Not for a moment give you your cool head :
Say we had twenty years and now have none,
Are you Old Fate itself to snap the thread,
And to cut both your life and mine in half
Before the whole design is written clear ?
This tapestry will not unweave itself,
Not I spend what is left of me to tear
Your bright thread out : let unfulfilled design
Stand as your tragic epitaph, and mine.

A Divorce of Lovers

3

One death's true death and that is,—not to care.
We do not die of feeling, even the extreme
Great arc of tension we had learned to bear ;
I woke once out of a disturbing dream :
I could not reach you. You were lost and cold.
And the worst was I did not even mind,
Distant myself, and tired like the old—
But then you woke and tender love was kind.
Now you condemn us to wake up alone
Without a human breast on which to lie
Until we sleep at last against a stone,
Still let me say I live and shall not die :
When you kill love and reason mystery,
You have condemned yourself to death, not me.

4

Did you achieve this with a simple word ?
Chase out the furies and the plagues of passion,
Cut through the shapes of conscience with your sword
And make your peace in such a ruthless fashion ?
I wonder what the weapon really was,
It is so windless here, so very still,
And we move through our palaces of glass
As freezing cold as if this world were Hell.
My guess is that the weapon's name was Pride.
It is a word the Furies understand ;
Their ghosts are gathering on every side,
And they will raise the hair upon your hand.
For who can punish ghosts or give them warning ?
They will be there at night, and in the morning.

5

What price serenity these cruel days?
Your silence and ungiving, my small cries,
Followed by hours when I can lift some praise
And make the wound sing as in Paradise.
What price the poise you ask for, the unharried?
Four rooted years torn up without a qualm,
A past not dead perhaps, but quickly buried:
On one side anguish, on the other calm,
Both terrible because deprived of hope
Like living eyes still open in a grave.
And we shall lunch, you say, that is our scope.
Between what we have lost and still might save
Lies, very quiet, what was once too human,
And lovely, and beloved, a living woman.

6

Dear fellow-sufferer, dear cruelty,
"I feel so married to you," once you said,
And it is you who now unmarry me.
I wish I could hold fast your tired head,
Or bind up all the wounds that we have made,
Say that I never hurt, you never saddened,
Say we were good and peaceful, undismayed—
The truth is that we always wounded, maddened,
Tore every joy out of such pain, it is
No wonder that the battle nearly killed.
From such inhuman ways you wish to save us:
Oh, is it better now, all anguish stilled?
Tell me what sovereign remedy you found
To call this better, this one mortal wound?

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7

Your greatness withers when it shuts out grief
And must assert itself through the denying
Of what was lately sap and the green leaf,
And this new stance resembles only dying.
Castrati have pure voices, as we know,
But the mature who mutilate by choice,
Who cut the heart out so that they may grow,
What sweetness flows from such a tortured voice ?
So you would gather in and cherish power,
"Today I have grown old", is your decree ;
You cut down passion like a summer flower,
And chill the ripening season's warmth in me,
Whose strength was wiser when you could enfold
Another in your arms against the cold.

8

Now we have lost the heartways and the word,
Our senses blinded, our five wits too numb,
Like planes that circle, or a blundering bird
That cannot chart the clouded skies for home.
Now rocked and trundled through the empty spaces,
We hang upon the hope that some thin radar
May light from deep within our darkened faces,
And tell us what to do, and where we are ;
Focus the awful blurring of the dream,
And give some destination to the heart.
What can it tell us, that deep inward beam,
How write a new course on this troubled chart ?
Will this lost journey never have an end
Nor the skies open so that love may land ?

9

What if a homing pigeon lost its home,
Were wrenched out of the orbit of sensation,
Its instinct killed, what would it then become?
A haunted traveller with no destination,
Circling the air above strange roosts to climb
Upward again, more fearful, more harassed,
The gentle voice repeating all the time
The phrases that had meaning in the past,
"Where is my true love, O where is my nest?
Where can I shut this terrible bright eye
And put my head under a wing to rest?"
That baffled wanderer, that lost one, I
Who for a whole month now have flown and flown,
And cannot land, and cannot find my own.

10

So drive back hating Love and loving Hate
To where, until we met, they had been thrown
Since infancy: forever lock that gate
And let them lacerate themselves alone,
Wild animals we never learned to tame,
But faced in growing anguish through the mist,
Elusive beasts we did not dare to name,
And whom we could not dominate or trust.
Now bury childish hunger, childish greed
In play-pen, zoo-pen, whatever pen will hold
The wild frustration and the starving need:
This is your method, so I have been told.
And mine? Stand fast, and face the animal
With the full force and pardon of the soul.

A Divorce of Lovers

11

It does not mean that we shall find the place
Called peaceable in the old hopeful prints
Where every tiger has a human face,
And every lamb can make a lion wince—
We met too late to know our meeting kind,
Too late for me to educate your heart,
Too late for you to educate my mind.
We shall be hurt again, and badly hurt ;
There are torrents we cannot ever wall,
And there are arid deserts still to cross.
We shall not come where the green mercies fall,
To perfect grace, nor forget cruel loss—
But if we turn back now in such distress,
How find the way out of this wilderness ?

12

Others have cherished, perhaps loved me more ;
Through none have I endured so much disgrace,
And none has challenged me so deep and sore,
Brought to the surface such hard truth to face.
Our love has always been a two-edged sword
We handled brutally in self-protection :
The wounds we suffered were equal and were hard,
Yet your eyes looked in mine without deflection.
I never could imagine flight or fear,
I never doubted what the challenge was—
When angels and when furies fly so near,
They come to force Fate at a crucial pass.
They battle for some element or ghost :
What soul is being born to us, or lost ?

13

Wild seas, wild seas, and the gulls veering close ;
Dark islands float upon the silver Sound ;
This weather is too sombre for repose,
And I suffer the truth I have not found
As gulls suffer the wind and ride it too :
The speechless battle with the inner weather
That longs only to end with peace in you :
Oh when you struck me did you strike your mother ?
Did I strike back to come into the dream ?
(nothing but storm and the wild seas today)
No wonder you withdrew and I still scream :
What present riches did we throw away
To act the ancient drama out until
The past and we cracked open and stood still ?

14

For all the loving words and difficult
Work on the unregenerate heart, we foundered
Upon the seaming of a secret fault,
As rocks, mined by a flaw, are slowly sundered.
The need that joined us was too young and strong,
Yielding to violence and rage too soon,
Our every insight wrenched from some weak wrong.
This adult passion cried for a child's moon.
Not all the tenderness could set us free,
Nor all the steadfast hope through all the pain :
You never have been, you will never be
(The rock falls here, the secret flaw is plain)
My father, nor my son, nor any kin.
Where these words end, let solitude begin.

A Divorce of Lovers

15

As I look out on the long swell of fields
Where winter wheat grows sparsely through the SNOW
And all lies fallow for those later yields,
Abandoned, quiet, where the pheasants go ;
As skies move in slow motion overhead
To launch the rain and wind in a long gust,
Cold waves of air breaking on every homestead,
I beg my heart to lie still at long last.
But it thuds on, this animal gone blind,
And still enduring what strange marathon ?
I must regard it with an acid mind :
Have done, poor beast, I say to it, have done,
And let pure thought rest on the winter sky
Without your stubborn question and reply.

16

The cat sleeps on my desk in the pale sun ;
Long bands of light lie warm across the floor.
I have come back into my world of no one,
This house where the long silences restore
The essence and to time its real dimension ;
All I have lost or squandered I examine
Free of the wars and the long searing tension ;
And I am nourished here after the famine.
Though this was time that we had planned to spend
Together, circled on the calendars,
To walk my woods for one single week-end,
Last night I looked alone at the bright stars.
Nor time, nor absence breaks this world in two.
You hold me in your heart, as I hold you.

17

After a night of driving rain, the skies
Take on bright motion, radiant-obscure,
As thoughts like clouds traverse my human eyes,
Silence opens the world that I explore :
Mozartian gaiety, the lightest presence,
At last I welcome back my wandering soul
Into these regions of the strange transcendence,
And find myself again, alive and whole ;
Now intimations of a joy so pure
It needs no human love to rest upon
Come to me from the airs and re-assure :
As I make the great leap to the unknown,
The flower of courage is given back to me,
Exact equivalent of agony.

18

These riches burst from every barren tree ;
The brilliant mosses under balsam tell
All I have lost is given back to me,
And, naked as a newborn babe, I feel
The slightest change of air as an event,
Attend to every creak of the old floor
As to momentous words by angels sent,
Inner and outer worlds, mine to explore.
Take loneliness, take pain, and take it all !
Like some strong swimmer on the icy airs,
I glide and can survive the heart's own pitfall.
I tell you, I grow rich on these despairs :
For you I gladly yielded up my world,
Who now among enormous skies am hurled.

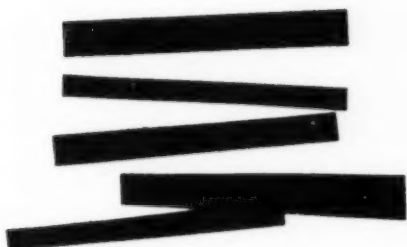
A Divorce of Lovers

19

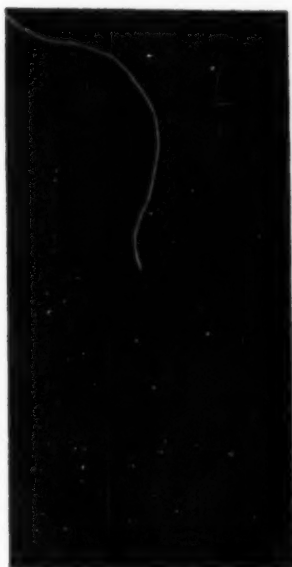
Where do I go? Nowhere. And who am I
Who sit alone in this small silent ark?
No one and no thing, but a breath or sigh,
Receptacle of light and flooding dark.
Now sunlight ripples through me in long waves,
Now the night rises, a tremendous tide,
And I am drowned or nearly. Then what saves?
Who is the bridegroom of this ghostly bride?
A thinking heart, a feeling mind stripped bare
Of warmth and flesh, the soft delight and thong,
Reduced to a fine bone, as thin and spare,
I may now make an instrument for song:
Poetry, pour through me your ruthless word
As strong as once was love that used me hard.

20

Now silence, silence, silence, and within it
The leap of spirit upward and beyond;
We take the heart's world in our hands and spin it
Out to the distant stars above this ground,
And let it go at last, and let it go
With those illusions that we held too long;
Against our will now we are forced to grow
And push out from all safety into song.
That is one half of it, the saving grace;
The other, the dark struggle, as, like worms
We riddle darkness, tunnel some small space
Where we can lie with patience through the storms.
And of these two who knows where wisdom lies,
Deep in the earth, or wandering the skies?



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